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ACCENT
A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
Volume XIII, Number 4 Autumn, 1953

J. F. POWERS:

The Presence of Grace

On a fine Sunday morning in June, Father Fabre opened the announcement book to familiarize himself with the names of the deceased in the parish for whom Masses would be offered in the coming week, and came upon a letter from the chancery office. The letter, dated December, dealt with the Legion of Decency pledge which should have been administered to the people at that time. Evidently Father Fabre was supposed to read it at the 9:30 and 11 o'clock Masses that morning. He went to look for the pastor.

Father Fabre, ordained not quite a year, had his hands full at Trinity. It wasn't a well-run parish. The pastor was a hard man to interest in a problem. They saw each other at meals. Father Fabre had been inside the pastor's bedroom, the seat of all his inactivity, only once; Miss Burke, the housekeeper, never. The press of things was very great in the pastor's room, statues, candlesticks, cases of sacramental wine, bales of pious literature and outdated collection envelopes, two stray pews and a prie-dieu, the implements and furniture of his calling. There was a large table-model radio in his bed, and he obviously slept and made the bed around it. That was about it.

Father Fabre found the pastor in the dining room. "Little late for this, isn't it?" he said. He held out the letter which had wintered in the pastor's room.

"Don't watch me eat," said the pastor, a greying dormouse. He

had had the 6:30 and 8 o'clocks, and was breaking his fast — not very well, Father Fabre thought, still trying to see what was in the bowl. Shredded wheat *and* oatmeal? Something he'd made himself? Not necessarily. Miss Burke could make dishes like that.

The pastor shifted into a sidesaddle position, bending one of his narrow shoulders over the bowl, obstructing the curate's view.

Father Fabre considered the letter in his hand. . . . *immoral motion pictures / demoralizing television / indecent plays / vulgar radio programs / pernicious books / vicious papers and periodicals / degrading dance halls / and unwholesome taverns* . . . Was this the mind, the tongue of the Church? "Little late for this, isn't it?"

"No."

"I thought we were supposed to give it a long time ago." On the Sunday within the Octave of the Immaculate Conception, in fact. On that day, Trinity, pledgeless, had been unique among the churches of the diocese — so he'd bragged to friends, curates who were unhappy about the pledge, as he was, and he hadn't really blamed them for what they'd said out of envy, that it had been his duty to repair the omission at his Masses. "Weren't we?"

"No."

"No?"

The dormouse shook his head a half-inch. The spoon in his right hand was a precision instrument, scraping up the last of whatever had filled the bowl. Grain.

"I don't feel right about this," Father Fabre said, going away with the letter. He went to the sacristy to vest for the 9:30, talking to himself. It *was* a little late for the pledge. *No.* The Sunday within the Octave *had* been the day for it. *No.*

The white fiddleback chasuble he was putting on had been spoiled on Christmas. He'd been vesting, as now, when the pastor, writing out a Mass card for a parishioner, had flicked his pen at the floor to get the ink flowing. Father Fabre had called his attention to the ink spots on the chasuble. "S'not ink," he'd said. Asked what it was, he'd said, "S'not ink," and that was all he'd say. For a time, after that, Father Fabre wondered if the pastor's pen could contain some new kind of writing fluid — not ink — and thought perhaps the spots would disappear. The spots, the *s'not ink* spots, were still there. But a recent incident seemed to explain the pastor's odd denials. "Not a ball point, is it?" he'd said to Father Fabre who was about to fill his fountain pen from the big bottle in the office. *"No,* Father," said Father Fabre, presenting his pen for inspection. "Takes ink," said

the pastor. "*Yes,* Father." The pastor pointed to the big bottle from which Father Fabre customarily filled his pen, and said, "Why don't you try that?" "Say, that's an idea," said Father Fabre, going the pastor one better. "Better go and flush your pen with water first," said the pastor. And the funny part was that Father Fabre had gone and flushed his pen, before filling it from the big bottle that time. "I think you'll like *that,*" said the pastor. *That* was *Quink*. The dormouse had the casuist's gift, and more.

He escaped much of man's fate. Instead of arguing his way out of a jam, or confessing himself in error, the pastor simply denied everything. It was simple — as simple as when he, as priest, changed the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. But he had no power from his priesthood to deny the undeniable, for instance that he'd spoiled a good chasuble. When he said "S'not ink," nothing was changed. He could really slow you up, though, if you were inclined to disagree with him and to be rational about it.

When the pastor entered the sacristy before the 9:30, Father Fabre was ready for him. "Father," he said, "I can't give this pledge in conscience — not as it's given in some parishes. I can't ask the people to rise as a body and raise their right hands, to repeat after me words which many of them either don't understand the full meaning of, or don't mean to abide by. I don't see anything *wrong* with giving it to those who mean to keep it." He'd wrangled against the pledge in the seminary. If it was "not an oath," as some maintained, wasn't it administered by a priest in church, and didn't it cheapen the clergy to participate in such a ceremony, and one which many merely paid lip service to? Didn't the chancery use the word "invite" and wasn't "demand" the word for the way the thing was rammed through in some parishes? Couldn't outsiders, with some justice, call the whole procedure totalitarian? What *did* Rome think of it? Wasn't it a concession to the rather *different* tone in America, a pacifier?

But the pastor had gone, saying, "Just so you give it."

Father Fabre got behind his servers and started them moving toward the altar. He saw the pastor in front of a battery of vigil lights, picking up the burned matches. Parishioners who had used them would be surprised to know that the pastor blew out all the lights after the last Mass. "Fire hazard," he'd said, caught in the act.

Before the eleven o'clock, after resting a few minutes between Masses in his room, he went to the bathroom and called down the laundry chute to Miss Burke in the kitchen. "Don't set a place for me.

I'm invited out for dinner." He stood ready at the chute to cut her off but heard only a sigh and something about the pastor having said the same thing. He hadn't expected to get away with it so easily. They were having another critical period, and it was necessary, as before, to stand up to her. "I hope I let you know soon enough," he said. She should be happy, with them both gone. She wouldn't have to cook at all. And he was doing her the honor of pretending that she planned their meals ahead.

"Father!"

"Yes, Miss Burke."

"Is it Mrs. Mathers' you're going to?"

He delayed his reply in the hope that she'd see the impertinence of the question, and when this should have been accomplished, he said, "I hope I let you know in time."

He heard the little door slam at the other end of the chute. Then, as always in time of stress, she was speaking intimately to friendly spirits who, of course, weren't there, and then wailing like the wind. "Sure she was puttin' it around she'd have him over! But we none of us" — by which Father Fabre assumed she meant the Altar and Rosary Society — "thought he'd go *there!* Oh, Lord!"

He'd lost the first fall to the pastor, but he'd thrown Miss Burke.

Going downstairs, he heard the coin machines start up in the pastor's room, the tambourines of the separator, the castanets of the counter. The pastor was getting an early start on the day's collections. He wore a green visor in his room and worked under fluorescent tubes. Sometimes he worked a night shift. It was like a war plant, his room, except that no help was wanted. The pastor lived to himself, in a half light.

In the hallway downstairs, John, the janitor, sitting in the umbrella chair, was having coffee. The chair had a looking-glass back, and when John turned his head he appeared to have two faces.

"Thought you had the day off," said Father Fabre.

"Always plenty to do around here, Father."

"I suppose." They knew each other well enough now for John not to get off that old one about wanting to spend the day with his family.

"She's really rarin' in there," John said. "I had to come out here." He glanced down at the floor, at the cup of muddy water cooling there, and then fearfully in the direction of the kitchen. This did not impress Father Fabre, however, who believed that the janitor and the housekeeper lived in peace. "Not her responsibility," John said.

Father Fabre, knowing he was being tempted, would not discuss the housekeeper with the janitor. Curates came and went, and even pastors, but the janitor, a subtle Slav, stayed on at Trinity.

"I told her it was none of her business."

"*What* isn't?"

"If you want to go there, that's your business," John said. "I had to come out here." John reached down for his cup, without looking, because his hand knew right where it was. "I don't blame you for being sore at her, Father." ("I'm not," Father Fabre murmured, but John, drinking, smiled into his cup.) "I told her it's your business what you do. 'He's old enough,' I said."

"What's she got against Mrs. Mathers?" Father Fabre asked, wondering if Mrs. Mathers was any match for the housekeeper. A natural leader vs. a mental case. It might be close if the Altar and Rosary Society took sides. But the chances were that Miss Burke would soon be fighting on another front. Impossible for her to wage as many wars as she declared.

"Hell, you know how these old maids are, Father," John was saying. "Just needs a man. *You* can understand that."

Father Fabre, calling it a draw with John, turned away and left.

The other guests at Mrs. Mathers' didn't act like Catholics. Mr. Pint, a small man in his sixties, was surprisingly unfriendly, and his daughter, though rather the opposite, went at Father Fabre the wrong way. It might have been the absence of excess respect in her manner that he found unsettling. But Mrs. Mathers, a large motherly but childless widow with puffy elbows, had baked a cake, and was easy to take.

They were all on the back porch of her second-floor flat, watching Mr. Pint make ice cream.

"Let me taste it, Dad," Velma said.

"I can't be standin' here all day with this cream gettin' soft on me," Mr. Pint said.

Velma pouted. She had on a purple dress which reminded Father Fabre of the purple veils they'd had on the statues in church during Passiontide. Otherwise there was nothing lenten about Velma, he thought.

"If you taste it now," he said, "it'll just take that much longer to harden."

Mr. Pint, who might have agreed with that, said nothing. He dropped a handful of rock salt into the freezer, a wood-and-iron affair

that must have been as old as he was, and sank again to his knees. He resumed cranking.

Father Fabre smiled at Mrs. Mathers. Parishioners expected a priest to be nice and jolly, and that was how he meant to be at Mrs. Mathers'. With Mr. Pint setting the tone, it might not be easy. Father Fabre hadn't expected to be the second most important person there. The cake, he believed, had not been baked for him.

"Your good suit," said Mrs. Mathers. She snatched a *Better Homes and Gardens* from a pile of such magazines and slid it under Mr. Pint's knees.

"Sir Walter Reilly," said Velma, looking at Father Fabre to see if he followed her.

He nodded, doubting her intelligence, wondering if she was bright enough to be a nurse. Mrs. Mathers was a registered nurse.

"Aw, come on," Velma said. "Let me taste it, Dad."

Mr. Pint churned up a chunk of ice and batted it down with the heel of his hand. "By Dad!" he breathed, a little god invoking himself.

Mrs. Mathers wisely retired to the kitchen. Velma, after a moment, ingloriously followed.

Father Fabre gazed over the porch railing. With all the apartment buildings backed up together, it was like a crowded harbor, but with no sign of life — a port of plague. Miss Burke, he remembered, had warned him not to go. John, however, had said go. Mr. Pint's shirt had broken out in patches of deeper blue, and his elastic suspenders, of soft canary hue, were stained a little. Pity moved Father Fabre to offer the helping hand, prudence stayed it, then pity rose again. "Let me take it awhile," he said quietly.

But Mr. Pint, out to deny his size and years, needed no help, or lost in his exertions, had not heard.

Father Fabre went inside where he found the women, by contrast, laughing and gay. Velma left off tossing the salad, and Mrs. Mathers' stirring spoon hung expectantly in mid air. "I'm afraid I wasn't much help out there," he said.

"That's just Dad's way," Mrs. Mathers said. "Come in here a minute, Father, if you want to see something nice."

Mrs. Mathers led him into a little room off the kitchen. She wanted him to see her new day bed. He felt the springs as she had and praised the bed in her terms. He meant it when he said he wished he had one, and sat down on it. Mrs. Mathers left the room, and returned a moment later whispering that she believed in flushing the toilet before she made coffee. That was the quickest way to bring fresh water into

the house. Father Fabre, rising from the day bed, regretted that he wouldn't be able to pass this household hint on to Miss Burke.

Then, leaving the room, they met Mr. Pint, all salt and sweat, coming in from the back porch. He came among them as one from years at sea, scornful of soft living, suspicious of the women-folk and young stay-at-home males.

The women followed Mr. Pint, and Father Fabre followed the women, into the dining room.

"You're a sight," said Velma.

"Your good blue shirt," said Mrs. Mathers. She went down the hall after Mr. Pint.

"We're going to eat in a minute," Velma said to Father Fabre. "You want to wash or anything?"

"No, thanks," he said. "I never wash."

He had tried to be funny, but Velma seemed ready to believe him.

Mrs. Mathers, looking upset, entered the dining room.

"Should I take off her plate?" Velma asked.

"Leave it on in case she does come," Mrs. Mathers said. "Father, you know Grace."

"No, I don't think so."

"Grace Halloran. She's in the Society."

"Of course." Of course he knew Grace, a maiden lady. He saw her almost daily, a shadow moving around the sanctuary, dusting the altar rail and filling vases with flowers — paid for by herself, the pastor said. Her brother was a big builder of highways. She wasn't the kind to use her means and position, however, to fraternize with the clergy. "Maybe she's just late," he said, rather hoping she wouldn't make it. The present company was difficult enough to assimilate.

Mr. Pint appeared among them again, now wearing a white shirt. Had he brought an extra? Or had Mrs. Mathers given him one which had belonged to her late husband? Father Fabre decided it would be unwise to ask.

They sat down to eat. It was like dining in a convent, with Velma in the role of the nun assigned to him, plying him with food. "Pickles?" He took one and passed the dish to Mr. Pint.

"He can't eat 'em," Velma said.

"That's too bad," said Father Fabre.

Mrs. Mathers, brooding, said: "I can't understand Grace, though heaven knows she can be difficult sometimes."

"If she'd only come," said Velma.

"Yes," said Father Fabre.

"Vel had to work last Sunday and didn't get a chance to meet her," said Mrs. Mathers.

"That's too bad," said Father Fabre.

"Grace was my best friend," Mrs. Mathers said. "In the Society, I mean."

Father Fabre frowned. *Was?*

"I was dying to meet her," said Velma, looking at Father Fabre.

"Very nice person," he said.

"I just can't understand it," declared Mrs. Mathers, without conviction. Then: "It's no surprise to me! You soon find out who your friends are!"

Father Fabre applied his fingers to the fried chicken. "Well," he said. "She doesn't know what she's missing." Grace's plate, however, seemed to reject the statement. "Did she know I was coming?"

"Oh, indeed, she did, Father! That's what makes me so blamed mad!"

Velma went to answer the telephone. "Yoo-hoo! It's for you-hoo!" she called.

"She means you," Mrs. Mathers said to Father Fabre, who wondered how she could have known.

He went to the bedroom, where Mrs. Mathers, never knowing when she'd be called for special duty, had her telephone. When he said "Hello" there was a click and then nothing. "Funny," he said, returning to the table. "Nobody there."

"Vel," Mrs. Mathers asked, "was *that* Grace?"

"She didn't say, Mildred. Wouldn't she say who she was if she was Grace?"

"It was Grace," said Mrs. Mathers quietly. She looked unwell.

There was a rattle of silverware. "Eat your dinner, Mildred," said Mr. Pint, and she did.

After dinner, they retired to the living room. Soon, with Mrs. Mathers and Mr. Pint yawning on the sofa, Velma said, "I met some Catholic priests that were married, once." She had taken the chair near Father Fabre's. They were using the same ash tray.

"Were they Greek or Russian?"

She seemed to think he was joking. "They were with their wives, two of them — I mean they were two couples — but they said the ones that weren't married could have dates with girls if they wanted to."

He nodded. "It's only been observed among us since the eleventh century — celibacy." Velma looked doubtful. "It may be overrated,"

he added, smiling.

"I never tried it," Velma said.

"Yes, well . . . in some parts of the world, even now, there are married Catholic priests."

"That's what these were," Velma said.

"Maybe they were *Old* Catholics," he said.

"No, they weren't, not at all."

He looked across the room at the couple on the sofa. Mr. Pint appeared to be asleep, but Mrs. Mathers was trying to fight it with a *Good Housekeeping*. "That's a sect," he said, getting back to Velma. "They go by that name. Old Catholics."

"I wouldn't say they were that," she said.

He was ready to drop it.

"I met them in Chicago," she said.

"I understand Old Catholics are strong there," he said. "Comparatively."

There was a lull during which Velma loaded her cigarette case and Father Fabre surveyed the room — the bookcase with no books in it, only plants and bric-a-brac, and the overstuffed furniture rising like bread beneath the slipcovers, which rivaled nature in the tropics for color and variety of growing things, and the upright piano with the mandolin and two photographs on top: one would be the late Mr. Mathers and somewhere in the other, a group picture of graduating nurses, would be the girl he had married, now stout, being now what she had always been becoming. Mrs. Mathers was openly napping now. The room was filled with breathing, hers and Mr. Pint's in unison, and the sun fell upon them all and upon the trembling ferns.

"Mildred says you can't have dates."

Father Fabre looked Velma right in the eye. "That's right." He'd drifted long enough. He'd left the conversation up to her from the beginning, and where had it got him? "I take it you're not a Catholic."

"Oh, no," she said, "but I see all your movies."

"I beg your pardon."

"I liked *The Miracle of the Bells* the best. But they're all swell."

He felt himself drifting again.

"I enjoyed reading *The Cardinal,*" she said.

So had he. He wondered if a start could be made there.

Mrs. Mathers, whom he'd thought asleep, said, "Why don't you tell Father what you told me, Vel?"

"Mildred!" cried Velma.

Father Fabre blushed, thinking Velma must have remarked favor-

ably on his appearance.

"About the church of your choice," said Mrs. Mathers.

"Oh, that. I told Mildred *The Miracle of the Bells* made me want to be a Catholic."

Mr. Pint came to and mumbled something.

Father Fabre decided to face up to him. "Do you like to go to the movies, Mr. Pint?"

"No, sir." Mr. Pint was not looking Father Fabre in the eye, but it was as though he didn't think it necessary — yet.

"Why, Dad," Mrs. Mathers said, "you took me last Sunday night."

"Not to those kind, I didn't. Whyn't you let me finish? By Dad, I ain't so old I can't remember what I did a week back."

"Who said anybody was old?" Velma asked.

"Stop showin' off," Mr. Pint said. "I heard who said it."

Mrs. Mathers clucked sadly, too wise to defend herself.

Mr. Pint blinked at her. "You made me go," he said.

Mrs. Mathers saw her chance. "Ho, ho," she laughed. "I'd just like to see anybody *make* you do anything!"

"You can say that again! Tell him about your office, Dad," Velma said, but Mr. Pint would not.

From the women, however, Father Fabre learned that Mr. Pint had asked "them" — his employers, presumably — to build him an office of glass so that he could sit in it, out of the dirt and noise, and keep an eye on the men who worked under him.

"Why shouldn't they do it," said Mrs. Mathers, "when he saves them all the money he does?"

Father Fabre, about to address Mr. Pint directly, rephrased his question. "He has men under him? I mean — many?"

"Five," said Mrs. Mathers. "Before he came, they had six. He gets more out of five men than they did out of six."

"Two he brought with him," Velma said. "They've been with Dad for years."

Father Fabre nodded. Mr. Pint, with his entourage, was like a big time football coach, but what was Mr. Pint's work?

Velma, who had switched on the radio, cried, "Lee!"

Father Fabre watched the women closely. Evidently "Lee" was the announcer and not some entertainer to follow on the program. His sponsor, a used car dealer, whose name and address he gave, dispensed with commercial announcements on Sunday, he said, and presented music suited to the day. They sat quietly listening to *How Are Things in Glocca Morra?* Then to *The Rosary,* one of Mrs.

Mathers' favorite pieces, she said. Then to *Cryin' in the Chapel.* Father Fabre wanted to go home.

Lee came on again with the business about no commercials and also threw in the correct time. (Mr. Pint pulled out his watch.) Lee warned motorists to be careful on the highways.

"Don't judge by this. You should hear him on weekdays," Velma said. "Does he ever kid the sponsors!"

"He's a good disc jockey or he wouldn't be on the air," Mrs. Mathers said tartly. "But he's no Arthur Godfrey." It sounded to Father Fabre as though she'd been over this ground with Velma before. "Do you ever get Arthur, Father?"

"Can't say that I do, Mrs. Mathers."

"He might give you some ideas for your sermons."

"My radio isn't working."

"I'll take Lee," Velma said. She rose and went down the hall to the bathroom.

Mrs. Mathers whispered, "Father, did I tell you she wanted to call in for them to play a song for you? *Our Lady of Fatima* or something. She wanted it to come over the air while you were here. A surprise."

"No," he said. "You didn't tell me about that."

"I told her not to do it. I said maybe you wouldn't want it."

"No, I wouldn't." He was grateful to Mrs. Mathers.

Showing a little interest, Mr. Pint inquired uneasily: "What do you think of this disc jockey business?" He got up and turned off the radio.

"I'm afraid I don't know much about it," Father Fabre said, surprised to find himself engaged in conversation with Mr. Pint.

"Sounds kind of fishy to me," said Mr. Pint, sitting down again. He had opened up some, not much, but some. "You know it's just playing phonograph records?"

"Yes," said Father Fabre and then wondered if he'd said the right thing. Mr. Pint might have wanted to tell him about it. Fearing a lull, he plunged. "Certainly was good ice cream."

"Glad you liked it."

After the long winter, gentle spring, the sap running. . . . "That's a good idea of yours when you make ice cream — bringing an extra shirt, I mean."

There was a bad silence, the worst of the afternoon, crippling every tongue. Even Velma, back with them, was quiet. Mr. Pint was positively stony. Finally, as if seeing no other way, Mrs. Mathers explained:

"Mr. Pint lives here, Father."

"He does?"

"Yes, Father."

"I guess I didn't know."

"I guess I didn't tell you."

"No reason why you should've," he said quickly. "You do have quite a bit of room here." He seemed to be perspiring. "Certainly do get the sun." He never would have thought it. Was there a chance that Mr. Pint, who acted so strangely, was not her lover? He took a good look at Mr. Pint. Was there a chance that he was? In either case, Mrs. Mathers had planned well. Father Fabre, taking out his handkerchief, blew his nose politely and dabbed at his cold, damp neck. He was in very good health and perspired freely. The fat flowery arms of the overstuffed chair held him fast while the hidden mouth devoured him. The trembling ferns frankly desired him. He just never would have thought it.

"You should see my little room at the Y," Velma said. "So dark." She was looking at Father Fabre, but he could think of nothing to say.

Mrs. Mathers sighed. "Vel, you *could* stay here, you know. She could too." Mrs. Mathers appealed to Father Fabre. "The day bed is always ready."

"Oh, well," said Velma.

"So I had this extra bedroom," Mrs. Mathers said, as if coming to the end of a long explanation, "and I thought I might as well have the income from it — what's your opinion, Father?"

"Swell," he said. In the future he ought to listen to Miss Burke and stay away from John, with his rotten talk against her. A very sound person, Miss Burke, voices, visions and all. He ought to develop a retiring nature, too, stick close to the pastor, maybe try to get a job in his war plant. "I hate to rush off," he said, rising.

"Don't tell me it's time for devotions," said Mrs. Mathers.

They went down the street together. "You know, Father," said Mrs. Mathers. "I almost asked them to come along with us."

"You did?" Mrs. Mathers was hard to figure. He'd heard that hospital life made iconoclasts.

"What'd you think of Vel?"

"Who? Oh, fine." He didn't know what he thought of Vel. "What does she do?"

"She's with the telephone company, Father. She thinks she's in line for a supervisor's, but I don't know. The seniority system is the one big thing in her favor. Of course, it wouldn't come right away."

"I suppose not," Father Fabre said. "She seems quite young for that."

"Yes, and they're pretty careful about those jobs."

"What I understand." He was in line for a pastor's himself. They were pretty careful about those jobs too. "What does Mr. Pint do?"

"Didn't I tell you?"

"No," he said bleakly.

Mr. Pint was an engineer. "But he never touches a wrench. He's like an executive."

"Where?"

"At the hospital, Father."

"At City?"

"At Mercy, Father."

Oh, God, he thought, the nuns were going to be in on it too. They walked the next block in silence.

"Who plays the mandolin?" he asked.

"He does."

They walked another block in silence. "I don't want to get TV," she said plaintively. She brightened at the sight of a squirrel.

"Don't care for TV?"

"No, it's not that. I just don't know how long I'll keep my apartment."

Was Mrs. Mathers saying that she'd get out of town, or only that she'd move to another parish? If so, she was a little late. By feasting at their board, he had blessed the union, if any, in the eyes of the parish. What a deal! It was too late for him to condemn the enamored couple, one of whom was out of his jurisdiction anyway (in parting, he had shaken Mr. Pint's hand). It was a bad situation, bad in itself and bad because it involved him. Better, though, that they live in sin than marry in haste. That was something, however, that it would take theologians (contemplating the dangers of mixed marriage, the evil of divorce) to see. He knew what the parishioners would think of that.

And the pastor . . .

At the church, at the moment of parting, he said, "You're going to be early for devotions." That was all. To thank her, as he wanted to, for the good dinner would be, in a way, to thank her for compromising him with parish and pastor. It was quite enough that he say nothing to hurt her, and go.

"I've got some things to do around the side altars," Mrs. Mathers said.

He nodded, backing away.

"You suppose Grace'll be inside?" she called after him, just as if all were now well between her and her best friend in the Society.

He had his back to her and kept going, plowed on, nodding though, vigorously nodding like one of the famous yes-horses of Odense. For a moment he entertained the idea that Mrs. Mathers was a mental case, which would explain everything, but it wouldn't do. Mrs. Mathers remained a mystery to him.

In the rectory, he started up the front stairs for his room. Then he went back down, led by sounds to the converts' parlor. There he found a congregation of middle-aged women dressed mostly in navy blues and blacks, unmistakably Altar and Rosary, almost a full consistory, and swarming.

"Could I be of any service to you ladies?"

The swarming let up. "Miss Burke said we should wait in here," someone said.

He hadn't seen who had spoken. "For me?" he said, looking them over. He saw Grace sorrowing in their midst.

"No, Father," said someone else, also hidden from him. "We're here to see the pastor."

"Oh," he said.

"*He* went out on a sick call," said someone else.

"Oh," he said, and escaped.

One minute later he was settling down in the garage, on the bottom rung of a folding ladder, the best seat he could find. He picked up a wrench, got grease on his fingers, and remembered that Mr. Pint never touched a wrench. He wondered where he'd gone wrong, if there was anything he might have done, or might yet do. There was nothing. He attributed his trouble to his belief, probably mistaken, that the chancery had wanted a man at Trinity to compensate for the pastor. Father Fabre had tried to be that man, one who would be accessible to the people. The pastor strenuously avoided people. He was happy with the machines in his room, or on a picnic with himself, topped off perhaps with a visit to the zoo. The assistant was the one to see at Trinity. Naturally there were people who would try to capitalize on his inexperience. The pastor gave him a lot of rope. Some pastors wouldn't let their curates dine out with parishioners — with good reason, it appeared. The pastor was watchful, though, and would rein in the rope on the merest suspicion. Father Fabre was thinking of the young lady of charm and education who had come to him after Mass one Sunday with the idea of starting up a

study club at Trinity. He'd told the pastor and the pastor had told him, "It's under study." You might think that would be the end of it. It had been, so far as the young lady was concerned, but that evening at table Father Fabre was asked by the dormouse if he knew about young ladies.

"Know about them?"

"Ummm." The dormouse was feasting on a soda cracker.

"No," said Father Fabre, very wise.

"Well, Father. I had them all in a sodality some years ago." (Ordinarily untalkative to the point of being occult, the pastor spoke now as a man compelled, and Father Fabre attended his every word. The seminary professors had harped on the wisdom of pastors, as against the all-consuming ignorance of curates.) It seemed that the pastor, being so busy, didn't notice how the young ladies showed up for induction during the few years of the sodality's existence at Trinity, but from the day he did, there had been no more of that. (*What?* Father Fabre wondered but did not interrupt.) The pastor was not narrow-minded, he said, and he granted that a young woman might wear a bit of paint on her wedding day. But when sodalists, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, Mary Immaculate, presented themselves at the communion rail in low-necked evening gowns, wearing lipstick, stuff in their eyes, and with their hair up in the permanent wave, why then, Gentlemen — the pastor used that word, causing Father Fabre to blink and then to realize he was hearing a speech the pastor must have given at a clergy conference — there was something wrong somewhere and that was why he had suppressed the sodality in his parish.

By God, thought Father Fabre, nodding vigorously, the pastor had a point! Here was something to remember if he ever got a church of his own.

It must have touched the pastor to see his point so well taken by his young curate, for he smiled. "You might say the scales dropped from my eyes," he said.

But by then Father Fabre, gazing at the cracker flak on the pastor's black bosom, had begun to wonder what all this had to do with a study club, and must have shown it.

"A study club's just another name for a sodality," the pastor prompted. "See what I mean?"

Father Fabre did not, not unless the pastor meant that young ladies were apt to belong to either and that, therefore, his curate would do well to steer clear of both. Hear their sins, visit them in sickness

and prison, give them the Sacrament. Beyond that, there wasn't much to be done for or about them. In time they would get old and useful. The pastor, for his part, had put them away in the cellar part of his mind to ripen like cheese. But the good ladies of the Altar and Rosary were something else again. Nuns could not have kept the church cleaner, and the good ladies, unlike nuns, didn't labor under the illusion that they were somehow priests, only different, and so weren't always trying to vault the communion rail to the altar.

"You want to be one of these 'youth priests,' Father?"

"I haven't thought much about it."

"Good."

But, as the pastor must have noticed, Father Fabre had wanted to get some "activities" going at Trinity, believing that his apostolate lay in the world, with the people, as the pastor's obviously didn't. Well, he had failed. But he wasn't sorry. Wasn't there enough to do at Trinity, just doing the regular chores? For the poor, the sick and dying, yes, anything. But non-essentials he'd drop, including dining out with parishioners, and major decisions he'd cheerfully hand over to the pastor. (He still thought the man who rented owls to rid you of pigeons might have something, for that was nature's way, no cruel machines or powders. But he'd stop agitating for the owls, for that was another problem for the pastor, to solve or, probably, not to solve.) Of course the parish was indifferently run, but wasn't it a mistake to keep trying to take up *all* the slack? He'd had himself under observation, of late. It seemed to him his outlook was changing, not from a diminution of zeal, not from loss of vision, but from growing older and wiser. At least he hoped so. He was beginning to believe he wasn't the man to compensate for the pastor — not that he'd ask for a transfer. The bishop was a gentle administrator but always seemed to find a place in one of the salt mines for a young man seeking a change. Father Fabre's predecessor in the curate's job at Trinity had been anti-social, which some of the gadabout clergy said could be a grievous fault in a parish priest, but he hadn't asked for a change — it had come to him — and now he was back in the seminary, as a professor with little pocket money, it was true, but enjoying food and handball again. That afternoon, sitting in the garage, Father Fabre envied him.

The pastor handed a wicker basket to Father Fabre, and himself carried a thermos bottle. He showed no surprise at finding his curate

waiting for him in the garage and asked no questions. Father Fabre, the moment he saw the basket and bottle, understood that the pastor was returning from a picnic, and that Miss Burke, telling the ladies he'd gone on a sick call, thought it part of her job to create a good impression whenever possible, part of being loyal, the prime requisite. Who but the pastor would have her for a housekeeper?

They walked to the back door at the pastor's pace.

"Some coffee in here for you," the pastor said, jiggling the thermos bottle.

"Thanks," said Father Fabre, but he'd not be having any of that.

"One of the bears died at Como," the pastor said. "One of the babies."

"That's too bad," said Father Fabre. He pushed in the door for the pastor, then stood aside. "Some women to see you in the converts' parlor," he said, as the pastor passed in front of him.

The pastor nodded. Women in the converts' parlor; he would see them.

"I don't know," Father Fabre said. "It may concern me — indirectly." Then, staring down at the kitchen linoleum, he began an account of his afternoon at Mrs. Mathers'. At the worst part — his chagrin on learning of the set-up there — the pastor interrupted. He filled an unwashed cup from the sink with the fluid from the thermos bottle, gave it to Father Fabre to drink, and watched to see that he did. Father Fabre drank Miss Burke's foul coffee to the dregs and chewed up a few grounds. When he started up his account again, the pastor interrupted.

"That's enough," he said.

Father Fabre, for a moment, thought he was in for it. But when he looked into the pastor's eyes, there was nothing in them for him to fear, nor was there fear, nor even fear of fear, bravado. The pastor's eyes were blue, blank and blue.

Father Fabre followed the pastor at a little distance, out of the kitchen, down the hallway. "Will you need me?" he said.

With an almost imperceptible shake of his head, the pastor walked into the converts' parlor, leaving the door ajar as always when dealing with women.

Father Fabre stayed to listen, out of sight of those inside. He soon realized that it had been a mistake to omit all mention of Velma in his account, as he had, thinking her presence at Mrs. Mathers' incidental, her youth likely to sidetrack the pastor, to arouse memories of

so-called study clubs and suppressed sodalists. Why, if the pastor was to hear the details, didn't they tell him that Grace had been invited to dinner? Then there would have been five of them. The pastor was sure to get the wrong impression. To hear the ladies tell it, Mr. Pint and Father Fabre were as bad as sailors on leave, kindred evil spirits double-dating a couple of dazzled working girls. The ladies weren't being fair to Father Fabre or, he felt, even to Mr. Pint. He wondered at the pastor's silence. When all was said and done, there was little solidarity among priests — a nest of tables scratching each other.

In the next room, it was the old, old story, right from Scripture, the multitude crying, "Father, this woman was taken in adultery. The law commandeth us to stone such a one. What sayest thou?" The old story with the difference that the pastor had nothing to say. Why didn't he say: She that is without sin among you, let her first cast a stone at her! But there was one close by who could and would speak, who knew what it was to have the mob against him, and who was not afraid. With chapter and verse he'd atomize 'em. *This day thou shouldst be pastor.* Yes, it did look that way, but he'd wait a bit, to give the pastor a chance to redeem himself. He imagined how it would be if he hit them with that text. They, hearing him, would go out one by one, even the pastor, from that day forward his disciple. And he alone would remain, and the woman. And he, lifting up himself, would say, Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no one condemned thee? Who would say, No one, master. Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more.

"Think he can handle it?"

Whirling, Father Fabre beheld his tempter. "Be gone, John," he said, and watched the janitor slink away.

Father Fabre, after that, endeavored to think well of the pastor, to discover the meaning in his silence. Was this forbearance? It seemed more like paralysis. The bomb was there to be used, but the pastor couldn't or wouldn't use it. He'd have to do something, though. The ladies, calmed at first by his silence, sounded restless. Soon they might regard his silence not as response to a grave problem but as refusal to hold council with them.

"We don't feel it's any of our business to know *what* you intend to do, Father, but we would like some assurance that something will be done. Is that asking too much?"

The pastor said nothing.

"We thought you'd know what to do, Father," said another. "What

would be best for all concerned, Father. Gosh, I don't know what to think!"

The pastor cleared his throat, touched, possibly, by the last speaker's humility, but he said nothing.

"I wonder if we've made ourselves clear," said the one who had spoken before the last one. She wasn't speaking to the pastor but to the multitude. "Maybe that's what comes from trying to describe everything in the best possible light." (Father Fabre remembered the raw deal they'd given him.) "Not *all* of us, I'm afraid, believe that man's there against Mildred's will."

"S'not so."

Father Fabre gasped. Oh, no! Not that! But yes, the pastor had spoken.

"Father, do you mean to say we're lying?"

"No."

Father Fabre shook his head. In all arguments with the pastor there was a place like the Sargasso Sea, and the ladies had reached it. It was authority that counted then, as Father Fabre knew, who had always lacked it. The ladies hadn't taken a vow of obedience, though, and they might not take "S'not so" for an answer. They might very well go to the chancery. At the prospect of that, of the fine slandering he'd get there, and realizing only then that he and the pastor were in the same boat, Father Fabre began to consider the position as defined by "S'not so" and "No." The pastor was saying (a) that the situation, as reported by the ladies, was not so, and (b) that the ladies were not lying. He seemed to be contradicting himself, as was frequently the case in disputations with his curate. This was no intramural spat, however. The pastor would have to make sense for a change, to come out on top. *Could* the dormouse be right? And the ladies wrong in what they thought? What if what they thought was just not so? *Honi soit qui mal y pense?*

One said, "I just can't understand Mildred," but Father Fabre thought he could, now. At no time had Mrs. Mathers sounded guilty, and that — her seeming innocence — was what had thrown everything out of kilter. When she said Mr. Pint lived with her, when she said she was thinking of giving up her apartment, she had sounded not guilty but regretful, regretful and flustered, as though she knew that her friends and even her clergy were about to desert her. Mrs. Mathers was a veteran nurse, the human body was her work bench, sex probably a matter of technical concern, as with elderly plumbers who

distinguish between the male and female connections. It was quite possible that Mrs. Mathers had thought nothing of letting a room to a member of the opposite sex. She could not have known that what was only an economy measure for her would appear to others as something very different — and so, in fact, it had become for her, in time. Mrs. Mathers and Mr. Pint were best described as victims of their love for each other. It was true love, of that Father Fabre was now certain. He had only to recollect it. If it were the other kind, Mrs. Mathers never would have invited him over — and Grace — to meet Mr. Pint. Mr. Pint, non-Catholic and priest-shy, had never really believed that Mrs. Mathers' friends would understand, and when Grace defaulted, he had become sullen, ready to take on anybody, even a priest, which showed the quality of his regard for Mrs. Mathers, that he meant to marry her willy nilly, in or out of the Church. There must be no delay. All Mrs. Mathers needed now, all she'd ever needed, was a little time — and help. If she could get Mr. Pint to take instructions, they could have a church wedding. Velma, already Catholic in spirit, could be bridesmaid. That was it. The ladies had done their worst — Father Fabre's part in the affair was criminally exaggerated — but the pastor, the angelic dormouse, had not failed to sniff out the benign object of Mrs. Mathers' grand plan. Or what would have been its object. The ladies could easily spoil everything.

One of the ladies got sarcastic. "Would it be too much to ask, then, just what you do mean?"

The pastor said nothing.

Then the one who earlier had succeeded in getting him to clear his throat said, "Father, it's not always easy for us to understand everything you say. Now, Father, I always get a lot out of your sermons — why, some I've heard on television aren't half as good — but I don't kid myself that I can understand *every* word you say. Still waters run deep, I guess, and I haven't got the education I should have. So Father, would you please tell us what you mean, in words we can all understand?"

It would have surprised Father Fabre if, after all that, the pastor had said nothing.

"S'not so," he said.

Father Fabre had to leave then, for devotions.

In the sacristy, he slipped into his cassock, eased the zipper past the spot where it stuck, pawed the hangers for his surplice, found it on the floor. The altar boys had come, but he wasn't in the mood for

them, for the deceptive small talk that he seemed to do so well, from ballplayers to St. John Bosco in one leap, using the Socratic method to get them to do their own thinking and then breaking off the conversation when he'd brought out the best in them. It wasn't necessary with the two on hand — twins who were going to be priests anyway, according to them at the age of ten. They had fired the censer too soon, and it would be petering out after the rosary, when it would be needed for benediction. He stood at the door of the sacristy and gazed out into the almost empty church. It was the nice weather that kept people away from devotions, it was said, and it was the bad weather that kept them away in the winter-time. He saw Mrs. Mathers kneeling alone in prayer. The pastor had done well for her, everything considered, but not well enough, Father Fabre feared. He feared a scandal. Great schisms from little squabbles grew . . .

And great affirmations! He'd expected the pastor to dismiss the ladies in time for devotions, but he hadn't expected them to come, not in such numbers, and he took it as a sign from heaven when they didn't kneel apart from Mrs. Mathers, the woman taken in adultery, or thereabouts; a sign that the pastor had triumphed, as truth must always triumph over error, sooner or later, always: that was heaven's promise to pastors. Life was a dark business for everyone in it, but the way for pastors was ever lit by flares of special grace. Father Fabre, knowing full well that he, in spirit, had been no better than the ladies, thanked God for the little patience he'd had, and asked forgiveness for thinking ill of the pastor, for coveting his authority. He who would have been proud to hurl the ready answer at Mrs. Mathers' persecutors, to stone them back, to lose the ninety-nine sheep and save not the one whose innocence he would have violated publicly then as he had in his heart, in his heart humbled himself with thoughts of his unworthiness, marvelled at the great good lesson he'd learned that day from the pastor, that Solomon. But the pastor, he knew, was zealous in matters affecting the common weal, champion of decency in his demesne, and might have a word or two for his curate at table that evening, and for Mrs. Mathers there would certainly be a just poke or two from the blunt sword of his mercy.

Father Fabre, trailing the boys out of the sacristy, gazed upon the peaceful flock, and then beyond, in a dim, dell-like recess of the nave used for baptism, he saw the shepherd carrying a stick and then he heard him opening a few windows.

CHAYYM ZELDIS:

Pursuit

he climbed
that dumb
night
straight up
the incline

(time just
after him)

the bullets
scoured about
his twisted
progress

(time scrambling
at his heels)

some way up
the peak
a bloody one
bit his
brain

(then
sudden
time
halted)

David's Harp

dispelling
the margins
of terror
the
  bearer
of resolved
pain
of
motioning
rain

an
  instrument
of
  timeless
grief

prognostic
as
  the
    leaf

The Snake

sun slipped
over the
world
skidding on the
stones
glistening earth's
bones

above the
green throated cactus
sped crows
black and moulting
early light
beyond sight

in the
dust children tossed
rolling their
faces in the
blue sky's
waves

a
chicken blowing
red and milk white
showed
strident as a
gem

while
at the fringe
the
snake
murmured
huskily
slipping from
his womb
of
iridescence

Sky's Helmet

sky's helmet
moon
    grenaded
the
caustic
    tongues
of blood
churn our
earth
to mud

who
who
who will
count
the fingers
lungs
the eyes
diverse organs

perhaps
the kites
perhaps
the snot-nosed fish
perhaps
the wiser worms

through the
long
centuries
of
poison

KENNETH BURKE:

On Covery, Re- and Dis-

Some time back, in these pages, the present reviewer was happy to salute an earlier book by Miss Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*. And he'd like to spread glad tidings about her recent work, *A Reading of George Herbert*.* To be sure, he saluted her earlier book because of its stress upon rhetoric, whereas on this occasion the word is hardly mentioned, the major concern this time being a plea for scholarship.

But the kind of scholarship she would advocate is quite in the spirit of rhetoric, for it concerns the problem of establishing the proper relationship between writer and audience. Miss Tuve holds: We cannot be adequate readers of a poem such as George Herbert's "The Sacrifice" unless we consciously *recover* (or "uncover") certain important facts about a cultural tradition that was still vigorous at the time when Herbert wrote, but is much weaker now, and in many notable respects has even been lost.

By the dialectics of the case, her position is somewhat opposed to contemporary critical trends that aim rather at *discovery*. Thus, she quarrels with a modern critic who, when writing on "The Sacrifice," exclaims, "What fun, all the Freudian stuff." And instead of trying to discover new things about the workings of Herbert's mind by applying modern terms quite alien to his thinking, she wants us to make ourselves as good readers as possible by getting to understand him in his own terms.

On the other hand, she contends that close textual analysis of a work may not be enough, no matter how scrupulously and perceptively such analysis is contrived. For certain important meanings that may be "in" the language of a given poem at the time it was written, may later be "outside" the poem, insofar as the tradition implicit in that language drops away. And with regard to a religious poet like Herbert, she says, "It is perilous to be too sure of 'the meaning' of his poems without some attempt to be the reader he wrote for." Or again:

> I would call attention to the fact that often what we require is plain ordinary information, for that is what time and history have

* ROSEMOND TUVE: *A Reading of George Herbert*. University of Chicago Press.

> done us out of. In the approach to poems, as in the approach to reality in any other form, we have right to only a limited amount of ignorance, or we shall quite simply not understand what we see. It is perfectly possible to claim that Herbert's poems are not worth the labour of understanding them, and I have been at pains to meet that objection. This is very different from the claim that understanding is not valuably or reliably advanced by information directly bearing on consciously intended meaning. Not until modern times has such a position been considered tenable by any serious criticism; it is now widely held.

The issue reminds us of a place in Chapter XVI of Croce's *Aesthetic*. Here, writing on "Taste and the Reproduction of Art," and considering the problem of historical restoration, Croce says:

> *Historical interpretation* labours for its part to reintegrate in us the psychological conditions which have changed in the course of history. It revives the dead, completes the fragmentary, and enables us to see a work of art (a physical object) as its author saw it in the moment of production.
>
> A condition of this historical labour is tradition, with the help of which it is possible to collect the scattered rays and concentrate them in one focus. . . .
>
> Where the tradition is broken, interpretation is arrested; in this case, the products of the past remain silent for us.

He then proceeds to consider what he calls "palimpsests." These are due to "erroneous historical interpretation," and are "new expressions imposed upon the ancient, artistic fancies instead of historical reproductions." . . . " 'The fascination of the past' depends in part upon these expressions of ours, which we weave upon the historical."

> Thus "the terror of the year 1000" has recently been discerned on the faces of the Byzantine saints, a terror which is a misunderstanding, or an artificial legend invented later by men of learning. But *historical criticism* tends precisely to circumscribe fancies and to establish exactly the point of view from which we must look.

Though Miss Tuve is far indeed from being a Crocean, her book does concern itself with one kind of "palimpsest," a kind resulting from the neglect of historical facts needed to make us the right kind of readers. And to this end, discussing "The Sacrifice" in accordance with "the idea that a poem is most beautiful and most meaningful to us when it is read in terms of the tradition which gave it birth," she points out that

> Herbert's poem belongs with two interlinked groups, both well known, of medieval lyrics; both groups belong as does his poem to a larger group, the Complaints of Christ to His People. All possibly had their spring in the liturgical offices of Holy Week, most obviously (for one group) in the *Improperia* or Reproaches of Good Friday.

Such placement of the poem provides her with leads that make her reading of it most appealingly sympathetic. And in the course of detailing the liturgical and iconographical traditions which lie behind the poem and which she thinks have not been given the consideration they require (she says that "Neither Canon Hutchinson's notes nor any critics of Herbert notice these liturgical connexions"), she arrives at a new view of the stylistic devices we associate with the "Metaphysical" poets. "The secret of Metaphysical wit," she says, "lies in a reading of life . . . inherited through at least the ten or twelve preceding centuries." Thus, she would give a "demonstration of likenesses between the 'Metaphysical' manner and the great religious and secular allegorical tradition, regnant for centuries, upon which it was nourished." Or again, when discussing "a late-Romantic association between the witty and the audaciously unconventional," she says:

> I think that nothing but good, for the poems, comes of disrupting this association and of foregoing these praises, founded as both are on rather superficial notions of individuality and originality. Poems meant to be quietly moving will be differently read from poems meant to startle. They may gain in depth of meaning. My final instances of witty conventional images belong together in a definable group — from the poems on the church as a building with its parts, its adjuncts, its ornaments, and its priest. They have brought on Herbert more than one charge (sometimes even thought of as praise) of novel quaintness and engagingly childish naiveté: of late they have rather been seen as "Metaphysically" clever, chiefly pleasurable for their capacity to surprise through dissonant and unexpected combinations.

Few of us are quite as heathenishly ignorant of the traditional lore as Miss Tuve, in the heights of her advocacy, sometimes seems to suggest. And even some of the heathens may have chanced upon works like Remy De Gourmont's *Le Latin Mystique,* where many oddities of mediaeval piety are assembled by a godless literary epicure who nostalgically savored as style what he could not even dream of accepting as doctrine.

But in any case, criticism generally seems to have considered the Metaphysicals' "wit" and "conceits" rather in terms of their cavalier

origins than as a selecting of salient expressions traditional to religious commentary. And in the course of her study, she gives a very good survey of the stylistic or terministic resources traditionally available to sacred poetry. Thus anyone interested in studying, or even passively reading, the Metaphysical poets in general and Herbert in particular should find this book engrossing.

* * *

In effect, Miss Tuve's consideration of "The Sacrifice" with regard to the traditional "Complaints of Christ to His People" helps define it as a literary species. And in effect her attributing of the Metaphysical style to liturgical and iconographical sources redefines this style as a literary species. We mean that, just as the emphasis upon "scholarship" somewhat concealed the underlying concern with a problem of rhetoric, so it also somewhat conceals an underlying concern with a problem of poetics. In statements like the following, she would seem to be discussing, in the name of "scholarship," terministic deployments that involve the resources of dialectic in general:

> All these poems belong to a mode of writing wherein there is nothing strange whatsoever in a body which is both fruit and vine, in an earthly rood-tree grown out of an apple of Paradise, in an apple which is a sword held in the hand of him who ate it. Symbolical writing (including Herbert's) is confusing only when we read symbol as picture. . . . Christ is the fruit, He is the oil of compassion from the tree of life, He is the babe, He is the king reigning from the tree, He is the life which makes it burgeon, He is Sapientia itself, and the tree is the knowledge of good and evil, and when they ate of it they should be as gods — all these are ways of saying the unsayable connexion between the doing of the sin and the undoing of it, and there is paradox and mystery at the heart of the whole conception Herbert knew and his predecessors knew.

As regards the genesis of the Metaphysical "wit," one might agree with Miss Tuve's contribution, but use it differently. One might see such wit not just in terms of a theological tradition, but as the fusing of it with a courtly tradition. For instance, in his introduction to *The Works of George Herbert,* F. E. Hutchinson writes of Herbert's mother:

> Donne describes her high intelligence and "sharpness of wit," as well as her devotion to the Scriptures and the services of the Church: "the wit of our time is profaneness; *nevertheless,* she that loved that hated this"; "her house was a court in the conversation of the best."

And surely, if we are to make ourselves into readers such as prevailed at those times, we could hardly go wrong in taking Donne's comments on wit as quite relevant to our views of its implications. Furthermore, where matters of "reverence" are concerned, should we not consider such possibilities of fusing social eminence with divine eminence as would be indicated by the similarity between "My Lord" and "milord"? In trying to make ourselves fit readers for works written in such a time, why should we not consider also such relationships between the language of worldly hierarchy and the language of the supernatural hierarchy, each with its great stress upon the exercising of one's desire freely to praise? In the case of Herbert, certainly, we have a man who, despite his early vows to write only sacred poetry, made many attempts to launch himself in a career at court; and only after the death of all those (including King James) who were his best hopes for preferment, did he finally decide to take orders in the Church of England.

We do not offer these remarks "debunkingly." For both by reliable historical data and by the internal evidence of Herbert's own writings, we are led to believe that, as a priest, he was exceptionally scrupulous in his ministry of the religious services and in his relations to his parishioners. But such considerations bring up another matter:

If we read but "The Sacrifice," the scholarly aids *from without,* as provided by Miss Tuve, are very necessary indeed. And if only that one poem survived from that era, her admonitions would be invaluable. Actually, as it so happens, since we have quite a body of poems by the same author, if we read the lot, carefully "indexing" them, and letting them throw light upon one another, we shall find, within, nearly all the interpretations that Miss Tuve assembles from *external* sources. (We say *"nearly* all.") But Miss Tuve seems to us essentially right in her contention that, insofar as a tradition weakens, many important elements once "in" the poem must be supplied "from outside" it. Only if scholarship had already produced a perfect dictionary, acquainting us with all the important public associations that clustered about a given word at the time of the usage in question, could "criticism" thereafter dispense with "scholarship." And Miss Tuve's work is, in effect, an attempt to suggest that certain meanings were more clearly "in" the poem at that time because at that time they were "in" the words which the poem used, whereas later some of these meanings faded from the poem because they faded from the poem's terminology. But often she would seem to suggest that more is lost than really has been.

Miss Tuve does make very helpful comments on about a dozen other poems by Herbert, thereby beginning an internal analysis. But once we mention the possibility of reading and "indexing" *all* the other poems of Herbert as an "internal" step towards making ourselves the kind of reader he himself was, we confront further possibilities. For instance, what of those twelve hundred or so "Outlandish Proverbs" he collected? They are a charming part of the man, and many of them throw another kind of light upon the themes in the lyrics. Or what of his engaging prose work, *A Priest to the Temple,* where he draws up rules of conduct for an ideal Country Parson ("that I may have a mark to shoot at")? Much of it is even shrewd, in a quite humane sort of way. And though a majority of Herbert's lyrics was written before it, it surely reveals the kind of context in which such sacred verse was in those times received.

We have no right to ask that Miss Tuve write a book different from the good one she did write. That's not the point we are trying to make. Let's try it this way:

Miss Tuve aims to *intensify* for us the mood of the poem she is analyzing. To this end, she asks us to consider other works, not by this author, but in the same tradition. Her purpose is to make us into the kind of audience for which Herbert wrote. At this point, the reviewer proposed to get "inside Herbert" by reading all of Herbert, and letting his various works serve as comments upon one another. But as soon as you do that, you come upon some works that, while they are as moralistically directed as "The Sacrifice," would serve as *latitudinarian modifiers* of the mood in that poem rather than as *strict intensifiers* of it.

Thus, when Miss Tuve writes, "Nothing we can do to this poem can prevent it from being a poem about man seen as guilty of wrong-doing, and faced with the choice of redemption," one may recall (in *A Priest to the Temple*) the brief Chapter XXVII, on "The Parson in Mirth":

> The Countrey Parson is generally sad, because hee knows nothing but the Crosse of Christ, his minde being defixed on it with those nailes wherewith his Master was: or if he have any leisure to look off from thence, he meets continually with two most sad spectacles, Sin, and Misery; God dishonoured every day, and man afflicted. Neverthelesse, he somtimes refresheth himselfe, as knowing that nature will not bear everlasting droopings, and that pleasantnesse of disposition is a great key to do good; not onely because all men shun the company of perpetuall severity, but also for that when they are in company, instructions seasoned with pleasantnesse, both

> enter sooner, and roote deeper. Wherefore he condescends to humane frailties both in himselfe and others; and intermingles some mirth in his discourses occasionally, according to the pulse of the hearer.

Or when she refers to "the awfulness of evil incarnate," one may think of these lines, on "The Parson in his house":

> He keeps his servants between love, and fear, according as hee findes them; but generally he distributes it thus, To his Children he showes more love then terrour, to his servants more terrour then love; but an old good servant boards a child. [*Boards* in the sense of *borders on.*]

The Absolute Charity and cult of Praise in the great liturgical moments may thus be seen as a pious completing, or rounding-out, of social scruples, such as find their expression in rules of thumb like this:

> The Countrey Parson owing a debt of Charity to the poor, and of Courtesie to his other parishioners, he so distinguisheth, that he keeps his money for the poor, and his table for those that are above Alms. Not but that the poor are welcome also to his table, whom he sometimes purposely takes home with him, setting them close by him, and carving for them, both for his own humility and their comfort, who are much cheered with such friendliness. But since both is to be done, the better sort invited, and meaner relieved, he chooseth rather to give the poor money, which they can better employ to their own advantage, and sutably to their needs, then so much given in meat at dinner.

* * *

The title of this review is adapted from a review (in *The Dial,* August 1925) of the late V. F. Calverton's book, *The Newer Spirit, a Sociological Criticism of Literature.* The reviewer there accused Calverton of failing to distinguish between "the discovery of a principle" and "the recovery of a fact." To appreciate *Gulliver's Travels,* we said, one would not need to know what psychological "complex" made Swift write of giants and pygmies, or what economic considerations led him to write his satire as an adventure story rather than as an essay. But "If Swift . . . makes a sly gibe . . . at some current political intrigue now forgotten, the modern reader must have the relevant environmental facts of this intrigue restored for him by editorial annotation if he is to appreciate the 'value' of the gibe." Or, elsewhere the issue was stated as a distinction between genesis as "cause" and genesis as "environment" ("environment" here being quite close to the sort of considerations Miss Tuve offers in the name of "tradition").

Obviously criticism should be for both Dis-a and Data. Suppose one could make oneself the perfect fall guy for an earlier writer. Miss Tuve seems to feel that therein would lie knowledge. But would it? Or if it is "knowledge" we ask of art, rather than of science, then at least, once we had equipped ourselves to be the wholly sympathetic enjoyer of another's text, might there not still be room for a further kind of knowledge, the kind that comes of meditating upon our memories of such enjoyed experiences?

And what sort of rationale would that further kind require? We believe that, as regards the aesthetic of Re, it would look like Dis. Recall, for instance, Herbert's magnificent poem, "The Collar," with its rebelliously spirited movement that suddenly veers in the closing lines, as the poet, who had slipped his collar, then at the last puts it on again, meekly answering, "My Lord" to a voice he heard addressing him as "Child."

What goes on here? First, we may note that, the relation between "My Lord" and "milord" being what it is, a poem addressed to a supernatural eminence could be interpreted as also ambiguously addressed to a worldly eminence. In fact, parody of this sort might be so readily available, that a scrupulous poet writing in the religious mode might even be troubled now and then lest his reverence secretly contain a modicum of such parody despite himself (being too narrowly conceived after the secular mode). Such a temptation is all the more likely inasmuch as human speech can have no positive terms for the supernatural order, all expressions for this order necessarily being borrowed from our terms for the other three orders: the natural, the social, and the linguistic.

Crashaw can make his readers go another way by using, for his accounts of supernatural love, a terminology so obviously sexual that readers are made ashamed of their own suspicions. In his literary devotions he can come so dangerously near to parody that his readers blush, not for him, but for themselves in thinking of such things.

But though one might parody the Herbert poem by ending it not "My Lord!" but "milord!" there is another important consideration here. We refer to the possibility that the role of his mother, too, figures in his ideas of "lordship," and that such motives overlapped momentously upon his poetic art. For instance, bear in mind the *mater-metra* pun in one of his Latin poems to the memory of his mother, or his references to sucking at the words of Scripture like a nursling. Recall also that he attributed flowing female breasts to his

God. For though Miss Tuve justly reminds us that this usage, too, is traditional, it is possible that this fact may be Dis-regarded. (Since the idea of divinity has been traditionally equated with just about everything in the way of imagery, the important consideration may be not so much the traditionality of a choice as the significance of that particular choice.)

Herbert's mother might with all the more reason figure in Herbert's sense of Supernatural Lordship, since his father died when he was scarcely past infancy. And there are, of course, the famous lines in "Longing":

> From thee all pitie flows.
> Mothers are kinde, because thou art,
> And dost dispose
> To them a part:
> Their infants, them; and they suck thee
> More free.

Here would seem to be dialectical (or "linguistic!") considerations worth pondering. If one uses a familial image, such as "mother" or "father" for the idea of godhead, and then moves "towards a higher level of generalization or abstraction" (as with the Platonist view of the dialectical progression from "the senses" towards "divinity") one comes next upon a term like "parent" that combines the nature of the two. If, then, one reduced the idea of "parent" to a corresponding image, androgynous attributes would seem inevitable.

Further grotesquenesses are possible here; for if the godhead, in his sacrificial capacity, is expected to take on (or *stand for*) all human sins, then insofar as the ambiguities of devout imagery can stand roundabout for perverse practices deemed evil by the doer, the devout sinner may preferably conceive the godhead in such terms of unintended parody as come closest to the imaging of his transgressions. (Think, for instance, what the imagery of Saint Sebastian would most readily lend itself to, for purposes of parody. The thought is not just "Freudian," but concerns relations between idea and image generally.)

In sum: There are quandaries that concern both "psychological" and "sociological" motives, if we must accept Miss Tuve's alignment of terms as final. But we, rather, would think of these quandaries as problems of "knowledge" that works of art do not resolve for us, though they give us invaluable material for use in our search, a search over and above the delight that we can have if we read and ponder texts with the help of such able investigators as Miss Tuve.

RANDALL JARRELL:

Constance and the Rosenbaums*

1.

Often that year, looking out the window of my office, I would see Gertrude walking down the walk with some teacher or student; she would say something, and then listen intently to the reply. I used to murmur to myself, *Ah, Questioner;* one day I said to her through the window, silently: *Whence comest thou?* and she answered, silently — so I pretended — *From going to and fro in Benton, and from walking up and down in it.* I told my wife this; it amused her. After that we used *walking up and down in it* as a sort of general phrase for Gertrude at Benton.

It always astonished me that people did not realize what she was doing: what could listening — in *Gertrude* — mean but a book? She listened only As A Novelist. In private life she either talked all the time, when she was excited, or else sat in glum, impatient silence, paying no attention to anything. Fortunately for her, she was easily excited. One of the only anecdotes she knew about her childhood, her mother had told her: "When I was three," Gertrude said, "and we had visitors, it would make me so excited I'd run around and around in a circle till I got dizzy and fell down in the middle of the floor."

She hadn't changed; now, though, she didn't fall, but grew drunk and bedazzling with her own words, felt her eyes fill with a light like earthshine. She was all right, then. But as long as the speed of her own mood wasn't carrying her through herself, she felt a restless dissatisfaction with herself, with people, with the world — a dissatisfaction not merely with being but with the possibilities of being.

Even her wit depended on the motion of the moment. Gertrude had all eternity to write her books in, and it weighed upon her lively spirit. The books were crushed down into method; as I read I was so conscious of what was being done that I scarcely noticed or cared what it was being done to — and life and death, men and women seemed to me for those moments no more than the systematic, verifiable abstractions of some galactic Mechanism. But in conversation Gertrude hit you with the poker, the bobby-pins in her hair, your own shoe —

* Book IV of the forthcoming novel, *Pictures from an Institution.*

you went away murmuring that anger is the mother of invention. Anger is also, as we know from Aristotle, the emotion nearest to reason: no wonder Gertrude's books seemed so rational!

I do not know whether it was reason or anger that prompted a philosopher to make an odd remark about her work. Gertrude had been saying that philosophy is something you read in order to get over philosophy. A little later the philosopher said to her, in a thoughtful, dispassionate tone, that her own novels seemed to him influenced by Spinoza, and that she should, like Spinoza, have given Roman numerals to the paragraphs, Arabic numerals to the sentences.

Gertrude said quickly, "His sentences aren't numbered, just the propositions." The man answered, "Yes, that's so," and laughed. Normally Gertrude would have kept herself from saying this; one could see how much the remark had stung.

Yet Gertrude could have replied, with justice, that she was far more of a moralist than Spinoza. Did he not say that he had "labored carefully not to mock, lament, and execrate, but to understand"? Gertrude had labored carefully to mock, lament, and execrate — to condemn utterly; and to do so it had also been necessary for her to understand, for her to have at the tips of her fingernails the Facts. The world divides into — Gertrude had read — facts; and the facts were what Gertrude knew. Were Memory truly, as the Greeks feigned, the Mother of the Muses, she would long ago have traded all nine of her daughters for Gertrude. Gertrude was as knowing as *Time*. All clichés, slogans, fashions, turns of speech, details of dress, disguises of affection, tunnels or by-passes of ideology, gravestones of rationalization and cant lived in Gertrude as though in nutrient broth; and Gertrude nourished them unharmed, knowing all, believing none.

She made her characters, held them, to the letter of the law. If one of Gertrude's heroines, running to snatch from the lips of her little daughter a half-emptied bottle of furniture-polish, fell and tore her skirt, Gertrude knew the name of the dressmaker who had made the skirt — and it was the right one for a woman of that class, at that date; she knew the brand of the furniture-polish that the little girl had swallowed; she knew, even, the particular exclamation that such a woman, tearing her skirt at such a moment, would have uttered — the particular sin that the woman, in thinking of her skirt at such a moment, would have committed. (The Church itself had no such casuist as Gertrude.) But how the child felt as it seized and drank the polish, how the mother felt as she caught the child to her breast — about such things as these, which have neither brand nor date, Gertrude

was less knowing; would have said impatiently, "Everybody knows *that!*"

Gertrude knew the price of every sin and the value of none; and almost everything, to her, was a sin — a sin and a shame, as our mothers would have said. Her books were a systematic, detailed, and conclusive condemnation of mankind for being stupid and bad; yet if mankind had been clever and good, what would have become of Gertrude? Often morality — to parody another definition — is the last refuge of a moralist. Gertrude's good jokes, her good spirits, her not very good income were rooted in, luxuriant above, the vices and stupidities of mankind: when she met someone who was either good or clever, she looked at him in uneasy antagonism. Yet she need not have been afraid. Clever people always came to seem to her, after a time, bad; good people always came to seem to her, after a time, stupid. She was always able to fail the clever for being bad, the good for being stupid; and if somebody was both clever and good, Gertrude stopped grading.

If a voice had said to her, "Hast thou considered my servant Gottfried Rosenbaum, that there is none like him in Benton, a kind and a clever man," she would have answered: "I can't *stand* that Gottfried Rosenbaum."

2.

Dr. Rosenbaum had never, except in Gertrude's dream, come to America in a submarine, but he had been everywhere else in everything else. His immense rawhide suitcase (it looked like the common ancestor of suitcases and safes) had on it labels that went as far north as the North Cape, as far south as Sydney. He had once spent a year and a half recording the songs of the inhabitants of the Gulf of Papua, and was still admired by anthropologists, who would say when you mentioned his name: "Oh yes, the friend of Malinowski." (I said to one of them, when he happened to mention Malinowski, "Oh yes, the friend of Rosenbaum"; he looked at me as though I were insane.) Whenever in one of Dr. Rosenbaum's compositions there was a theme a good deal more commonplace, more nearly diatonic than all the rest, you could be sure it was a Papuan folk-tune.

Long ago, Dr. Rosenbaum's settings of Brecht's most seditious poems — he specialized, in those days, in *Sprechstimme* — had left his audiences troubled and uncertain about the music, the police troubled but certain about the words; when the Germans went into Austria Dr. Rosenbaum escaped, as he put it, at the eleventh hour, by the skin of his teeth, without a garment. His first American work, a

secular cantata that used "The Witch of Coös" as its text, had in it the most idiomatic writing for skeleton that I've ever heard — one ostinato figure, half glissando xylophones and half violinists hitting their soundboxes with their bows, seemed to me particularly notable; but he had used almost as extraordinary an idiom for the Witch, for her son, and for Robert Frost, and it was hard for an audience to decide which of the four was most frightening. I thought that he had made the skeleton, correctly enough, the most sympathetic being in the piece — to accompany the line *The faintest restless rustling ran all through them* the orchestra played a far-off Bergish waltz-theme, as though spring had come late that year, and Dr. Rosenbaum, Constance, and I would all sniff, Constance quite sincerely. I liked to hear him humming parts of the cantata to himself; it was best of all when he would sing, with tremendous understatement: *"I* knew idt. *Idt vass de bones!"*

He had been working for about a year on a requiem mass for Alma Mahler; he would say about his mass, simply: "I vant to haf idt readty ven she die."

He loved hitherto unthought of, thereafter unthinkable combinations of instruments. When some extraordinary array of players filed half-proudly, half-sheepishly on to the stage, looking like the Bremen Town Musicians — if those were, as I think they were, a rooster, a cat, a dog, and a donkey — you could guess beforehand that it was to be one of Gottfried's compositions. His *Joyous Celebration of the Memory of the Master Johann Sebastian Bach* had a tone-row composed of the notes B, A, C, and H (in the German notation), of these inverted, and of these transposed; and there were four movements, the first played on instruments beginning with the letter *b,* the second on instruments beginning with the letter *a,* and so on. After the magnificent group that ushered in the piece (bugle, bass-viol, bassoon, basset-horn, bombardon, bass-drum, bagpipe, baritone, and a violinist with only his bow) it was sad to see an Alp horn and an accordion come in to play the second movement. Gottfried himself said about the first group: "Vot a bunch!" When I asked him how he had thought of it he said placidly: "De devil soldt me his soul."

I have heard him placed with the sentence, "He's a sort of Viennese Satie"; but his titles were not so strange as Satie's, and his compositions were a great deal stranger than Satie's. You did not know how to take them — did not even know how you were supposed to take them.

Some of his transcriptions and adaptations were quite popular, and all of them were admired; and he had published three volumes of an

immense work showing how content gets expressed in, and modified by, the forms of its time — three volumes, and there were more to come. The less technical parts were very entertaining and, sometimes, very astonishing; the more technical parts were, I believe, profound — I asked a friend, a composer, about these and his answer began: "It's commonly agreed. . . ." I saved that "It's commonly agreed. . . ." for the next question he asked *me*.

Constance told me, "He goes over your piece as if he were you, and the next girl's piece as if he were her — she. He seems to know what you would have done if you could have done it instead of what you did; I just don't know how he does it. And the worst things he says are the ones that encourage you most. It takes the weight of your pieces right off your shoulders."

My wife had heard one girl say to another, "You just haven't *lived* till you've had Dr. Rosenbaum for a teacher." I repeated this to him and, oddly, his face darkened; but then he said with a rueful smile that he was glad his light so shone before the world.

You say, after you have listened to someone talking for a while about music, or painting, or literature: "I see the line you're taking." It was impossible to say this about Gottfried.

It was impossible, that is, where music was concerned. Outside of that he took an extraordinary line — had one, as his girls would have said. He pretended to believe that the sculptures of Henry Moore are predictions of a kind of socialist Utopia, and would say resignedly: "Ve all look like dat, ven de State hass videredt avay." *Ven de State hass videredt avay* was one of his favorite phrases — he seemed to find it inexhaustibly humorous.

Benton's choreographer, a sunny Bachelor of Physical Education somehow derailed into the modern dance, loved Dr. Rosenbaum, and often asked him for dances for her students' recitals; he always assented cheerfully, since he could write a dance for her in fifteen minutes, and indeed would say: "Ven idt take more dan fifteen minutes, *zell me down de river.*" (He liked American idioms; and liked even better insisting that he had learned them, as a child, from the frontier novels of Friedrich Gerstäcker — it was hard successfully to dispute his contention.) The rhythms of his dances made any motions that accompanied them seem timid and constrained; and he specialized in long unexpected rests, during which the dancer would stand with one foot in air, waiting, while Dr. Rosenbaum looked at her with twinkling eyes. He himself liked ballet.

Once, along with *Transfigured Night,* he played a class Rachmanin-

off's *Isle of the Dead.* Most of his pupils had not seen the painting, so he went to the library and returned with a reproduction of it. Then he pointed, with a sober smile, to a painting which hung on the wall of the classroom *(A Representation of Several Areas, Some of Them Grey,* one might have called it; yet this would have been unjust to it — it was non-representational) and played for the class, on the piano, a composition which he said was an interpretation of the painting: he played very slowly and calmly, with his elbows, so that it sounded like blocks falling downstairs, but in slow motion. But half his class took this as seriously as they took everything else, and asked him for weeks afterward about prepared pianos, tone-clusters, and the compositions of John Cage and Henry Cowell; one girl finally brought him a lovely silk-screen reproduction of a painting by Jackson Pollock, and was just opening her mouth to —

He interrupted, bewilderingly, by asking the Lord what land He had brought him into. The girl stared at him open-mouthed, and he at once said apologetically that he was only quoting Mahler, who had *alzo diedt from America;* then he gave her such a winning smile that she said to her roommate that night, forgivingly: "He really is a nice old guy. You never would know *he's* famous."

"Is he really famous?" her roommate asked. "I never heard of him before I got here. But gee, before I got here *I'd* never heard of Dr. Crowley."

"I'm pretty sure he's famous — anyway, famous in Europe," the girl replied. Then her eyes brightened and she exclaimed, in scorn at her own forgetfulness: "Of *course* he's famous! He's in the *Britannica,* in the article on Schönberg."

Mrs. Rosenbaum was twelve or fifteen years older than he, a slight, animated, disquieting woman who had little to do with anyone except Dr. Rosenbaum, a few friends, and occasional visitors of her own — astonishing visitors, generally. She and Dr. Rosenbaum had money of their own, too, and not just his salary: they had a cook, a summer cottage at Cape Cod, and a new Simca convertible that Dr. Rosenbaum looked remarkably funny in, since he had bought it a size too small.

Mrs. Rosenbaum had brought with her, from the Old World, the remains of beauty; jewels — some family, some Jewels; a couple of fur coats which, cut as they were cut, worn with the provisional air with which she wore everything, made her look like the Queen-Mother of some tribe of Northern Canadian Indians — one left behind in the snow to die, gaunt but upright, calm, unrepentant. She had dresses of some of the finest vintages, and her new dresses were, almost, as

astonishing as the old: she must have had hidden, in a priest's hole behind the spears of their living room, a Foreign Seamstress. She dressed in no style to which the faculty wives were accustomed (in no style to which anybody on earth has ever been accustomed, had they only known) but they felt that her clothes were very foreign, very characteristic, and must have been once, to foreigners, very impressive. And they could buy records of her, some of them even *had* records of her, though her name was not Rosenbaum on the records but her own real unsayable Russian name; or rather, Rosenbaum was her real name now, but on the records one found the name that she used to have when, years and years ago, she had been a well-known singer of opera and *lieder,* and not the wife of a respected and fairly ill-known composer.

She looked at the world like a bird, considering; and you too considered; but you could not make up your mind whether she was a Lesser Bird of Prey or simply a song-bird of some dismaying foreign kind. She used too much make-up, her hair was dyed; she had almost frighteningly deep eye-sockets, so that her eyelids were like pieces of porcelain: when she looked at you for a moment with a bright sufficient stare, and then looked past you, you felt that you had been weighed upon her eyelids and found wanting. She judged by standards you guessed at uneasily, and kept her judgments to herself or gave them offhand, as if they could hardly matter to *you*: so that you decided that justice was not going to be done to you, and awaited, like a child, her smile. It was an unqualified, forthcoming, outgoing smile, a smile like spring: you could not believe in it, but it was so.

She said about her husband's compositions for voice, "No, my voice was ruined before I even met Gottfried." The comment was just; still, she could not resist looking mischievously at him as she said it. When I first knew them I noticed that he did little things to placate or mollify her, or to keep her from being troubled or aroused, and I decided that she was the dominant member of their household, but after a while I noticed that she behaved in exactly the same way about him: they were a Dual Monarchy.

Their cook, a Bavarian, was the Witch from *Hansel and Gretel.* She had decided that it is safer to feed than to eat people, but she smiled her old smile — I could never look at her without feeling behind me for an oven. Her smile was like a caricature of Irene's: you didn't believe in it, and it wasn't so. Good, kindly, crotchety Else! the Rosenbaums felt; how they could have felt this I do not know.

Else was not a talkative woman — she couldn't think of anything

to say — but she talked volubly on one subject: things that man could not find, no, not if he searched for a thousand years, in the stores and kitchens of the Americans. There is a delicious fish, called *fögel* or something of the sort, that dwells only in Lake — I forget the lake, but Else knew it; this fish cannot be found in the lakes, or in the ponds, or in the streams of North America — and when you have said that, what remains to be said of North America? Else thought that Americans are immoral, though childish, and drunk half the time. She had a leather-bound *Hermann und Dorothea* that she had received as a confirmation present; she looked around her at Americans and she saw that they had none — she could not help thinking them uncultivated.

People said about Dr. Rosenbaum's wife that she had married beneath her, and was really a princess of the house of — the houses varied: Hapsburg, Hohenzollern, and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha were the commonest. (I don't understand how they thought a member of any of the three could have been named Letscheskinskaya; perhaps they thought she had married into one and had picked up Gottfried later in life; perhaps they enjoyed saying what they said too much to worry about details.) Gertrude, on the other hand, said that she was Dr. Rosenbaum's mother.

3.

Constance was lonely during her first months at Benton. (She had known my wife and me too long for us to help: we were family, almost.) She made friends with a couple of the girls who worked in the offices at the college, and went on dates with them, sometimes, but they and the dates didn't know much about music — didn't know much about anything. They were hardly better than students, Constance felt; and Constance, now that she was through being a student, was through with students. She had — had always had — a taste for older people, for men and women. These seemed to her real life, not just fooling around. She looked fondly up to them, and they fondly down to her: she knew just how to act, just how to feel about herself, when she was with them.

Her father had said to me about her, when she was twelve or thirteen: "She doesn't want to grow up"; and had concluded, after a pause, soberly, "But she'll have to." I felt that she didn't have to — many people don't; but I was surprised that he knew she didn't want to. He was a remarkably methodical and unimaginative man.

So Constance went along the walks of Benton like Teufelsdröckh, searching for a Man, a Woman. And, for her, Dr. Rosenbaum was

one and Mrs. Rosenbaum the other; but along the walks and inside the classrooms of Benton there were others; and Benton's library, its gallery, its listening-rooms with their two expensive unsatisfactory phonographs — these too were full of the works of men and women, the works of man.

But the Rosenbaums were Constance's great find — and luckily for her, she was theirs. This astonished her and yet didn't astonish her: grown-ups were always adopting Constance. After a while she lived in and out of the Rosenbaums' house almost as if it were her own. It was full of the works of man: there were, badly arranged on its rarely dusted bookshelves, books in English, German, Russian, French, Latin, Greek — all the languages of the earth, Constance felt; and there were printed scores, photostats of scores, scores in manuscript, scores in Esperanto, almost. In the living room, over the fireplace, there was a copy of a Cro-Magnon painting of a buffalo: Gottfried said that it showed how American they had become. Elsewhere in the house there were many reproductions and a few originals: Vermeer's *Girl with the Red Hat* and *Girl with the Flute,* the painting of *Degas' Father Listening to Pagans,* several Cézannes, Delacroix's *Portrait of Paganini,* a real Vuillard, Kokoschka's *The Tempest,* two real Klees, Uccello's *The Rout of San Romano,* a Persian painting of a battle between owls and crows, a sketch of Mahler conducting, watercolors of Irene in old parts, costume-sketches for the parts, inscribed photographs of Janácek and Richard Mayr, a gray engraving of Vivaldi, Beethoven and Liszt letters in stand-up frames, glass on both sides so that one could see both sides of the page. There was no end to the confusion and richness of the house. Constance felt that it was in some strange way the world: that just as there are Sea-Cucumbers and Sea-Anemones and Sea-Horses, so there was at the Rosenbaums' the shadow of anything in the world.

The house held, besides its scores, many records: Constance would listen to the records as she worked her way along the bookshelves, pulling out books and thinking which ones she would (and which ones she could) read. As she sat on the floor by the shelves, occasionally looking up to see Mrs. Rosenbaum preparing a sort of High German tea, and Dr. Rosenbaum going jerkily over a student's exercise, lifting his brows in wonder as he marked — as she sat there everything would seem to her a dream: she would close her eyes, and then open them again and look at the Rosenbaums "like puzzled urchin on an aged crone/ Who keepeth closed a wond'rous riddle-book/ As spectacled she sits in chimney nook."

They were wonderful to her: a real Russian, a real Austrian, a real opera-singer, a real composer, a woman who had really sung with Chaliapin, a man who had really been a friend of Alban Berg's — Constance could scarcely see the Rosenbaums past so much reality: what she would not have given to be, as they were, a part of that reality! She even began to learn German — from a paper-bound *College Outline* of German, from Grimm, and from Heath's *Graded Readers.* (One of these *Readers* had a story by Dr. Rosenbaum's Friedrich Gerstäcker in it, one called *Germelshausen,* that Constance stumbled along in for a while, and then began to read with such excitement that she could hardly bear to stop to look up the words she didn't know; she didn't eat dinner, that night, till ten o'clock.) Constance felt that she was learning the language almost as well as a German child does: at the end of her first year she'd be able to say several words. But she tried to say them exactly as Dr. Rosenbaum did, and this was, if there is such a thing, a Pyrrhic defeat.

"Ach, mein Gott!" said Mrs. Rosenbaum, laughing — and then laughing harder at Constance's woe-begone face. "Speak as I do, Constance, with a little lightness — don't speak like a *German!* If you go on imitating *him,* that Ochs von Lerchenau, you will in the end sound exactly like Mariandel." *(Der Rosenkavalier* was one of her favorite operas; she had played, in Prague and Dresden and Vienna, Octavian, and had pulled skirts on over her riding-trousers and pretended to be the chambermaid Mariandel.) All at once her face changed, she held her whole body differently, and she sang

Nein, nein, nein, nein!
I' trink' kein Wein

in the voice of a soiled dumpling with dreams: Constance and Dr. Rosenbaum almost said *Gesundheit!* to make sure her wandering spirit got safely back into her breast. It returned and said mockingly, "Almost as good as Olszewska, don't you think?"

It was a horrible vexation to her that Olszewska was on *the* recording of *Der Rosenkavalier,* and not she; she said, "Mayr *apologized* to me — apologized in the abjectest terms. I let Olszewska know what I thought of it." Constance asked, "What did she say?" Irene said, smiling: "She only smiled."

She had in her breast none of the rigidity that you find sometimes in even the softest Austrian or Bavarian one; and Dr. Rosenbaum's soul was as supple as hers, though grainier. And Irene had, occasionally, a trace of the peculiar fantastic wit that keeps surprising the

reader of Leonov or Pasternak, so that a man is described as he looks reflected in the coffee pouring from a spout into a cup, and the soft dark blanket that hangs in one corner of a room in the slums turns out to be the sky.

4.

Old faces are forbidding or beautiful for what is expressed in them; in a face that is young enough almost everything but the youth is hidden, so that it is beautiful both for what is there and what cannot yet be there. Constance's face was a questionmark that you looked at and did not want to find an answer for.

But Constance was of no importance, and people -- usually without meaning to — showed her that they knew this; it did not bother her, since she herself felt that she was of no importance. (Later on, she felt, who knows?) President Robbins was as informal and democratic with her as though the United Nations were going to give him an award for it; but he was that way with everybody, and was proud that he was: the sun shines on the just and unjust, and on secretaries. Some people treated Constance unusually well because she was unusually beautiful, but President Robbins was not a person of this sort: he had never seen a girl so beautiful as Benton — or for that matter, as Harvard, Yale, or Princeton.

The person who would have treated Constance as a girl like any other would have treated Cézanne as a painter like any other, I think. When you looked at Constance in a certain light, or when she had a certain look, you kept on looking and stopped because your heart was in your throat. The freshmen getting off the train were not an hour younger than Constance; it seemed unbearable that she should change. Women so thin and cruel and glamorous that they appeared to have stepped from the illustrations of *Vogue* felt kindly toward Constance: *Poor thing!* they said to themselves, remembering that they themselves had been so once. Ah, but they hadn't. When you looked at Constance you wanted change and chance and choice to *leave her alone:* you were angry at existence, that could think of this, and then temper it into wisdom with time, and then destroy it.

Not every child has, at the age of five, lost a mother; at the age of fourteen, lost a twin sister and a father. This had happened to Constance; or had it? Such events were not in her style of life, which was a dreamy absent innocent style. She had been, somehow, sheltered from things; and when she hadn't been she had managed, like a sleepwalker, to shelter herself from them without ever seeming to. Later on what she knew already would recur to Constance, and this

time it would be transmuted: life is, so to speak, the philosopher's stone that turns knowledge into truth.

Since her grandmother had died Constance had been — except for a little money, gone now — alone in the world. She had finished college (a plain old-fashioned college not a bit like Benton) the spring before, and her job at Benton was only a way to put off making up her mind about what she was going to do. Everybody had told her, ever since she was a little girl, that when she grew up she would surely become a concert pianist; but at college she had, as she always told you, "majored in music," and had learned that people don't become concert pianists any more than they become sweepstakes winners. Still, *somebody* wins sweepstakes: Constance practised faithfully, read and thought about music, composed — as she would say modestly — "a little"; she was a girl ripe for the Rosenbaums.

Before she had known Gottfried six weeks she had become — need I say it? — a composer of the twelve-tone school, an exponent of what the French call *la musique sérielle et dodécaphonique.* A female exponent, alas! It was discouraging to her, incomprehensible too, that no woman has ever written a very good piece of music; but she was a modest girl, and besides would feel vaguely: Later on, who knows? This phrase, or the attitude it represents, was her form of optimistic assertiveness.

When you heard Constance's current pieces — she would play them for you — you realized that Constance had put in a good deal of time on the works of Berg, Schönberg, and Gottfried Rosenbaum; you realized, also, that she was a young girl. I said to Gottfried, "How *can* twelve-tone music sound so innocent?" He answered — but I do not indicate his pronunciation any longer: spelling doesn't do it justice, has never done it justice. He answered: "What is done in trust is trust. We shall all sound so, go far enough into the future."

5.

Visits to friends, sometimes, are like *Zweiback,* or *frijoles refritos,* or twice-told tales: the friends are themselves still, bondedly so, and you go home sounder and a little subdued, the staple of your life re-established. Visits to the Rosenbaums weren't like this.

I went by one evening for help with the Rilke I was translating. (You can always get a German to help you with the German, but who is there to help you with the English?) I rang the bell, and admired the two-foot-high catalpa in a pot on the porch. Irene had succeeded in dwarfing most of our native trees; the Persian, by one,

looked like a saber-toothed tiger. She espaliered, too — there were family trees, peach- and pear- and plum-bearing, on half the walls.

Else let me in. Constance was there, as usual; the phonograph was playing, as usual — this time it was a piece that sounded as though it might have been called *Pages from a Dentist's Life;* there was a score on the floor, as usual, with two teacups beside it. (The house floated on tea and Rhine wine.) Constance kissed me. Irene and Gottfried shook my hand; like most Europeans, they gave the impression of wanting to shake hands with the cat whenever it came into the room — to shake hands and utter a short formal sentence that would express their genuine pleasure at getting to see Frau Katze again. Gottfried greeted me with baroque, and Irene with blank, effusiveness. I looked at her and then looked at Gottfried; he nodded.

Normally Irene spoke her mind, shortly and firmly, about anything and everything. But once every ten days or two weeks there was a day of pure unresponsiveness for her, so that she might as well, might better, not have been there at all; you felt as you do when a character in a Chekhov play says, "The wings of the Angel of Silence have passed over us." They would pass for a day, for two days even, and then, thank God, stop passing. Until then you spoke to her, she registered what you said, and after a moment replied to what you had said; she registered, she replied, she did not respond — not so much as by changing the light on the surface of her eyes, even. Her eyes kept their absent, preoccupied, unchanging stare. She was absorbed in something — what, you did not know. If you said something good you thought, "Irene will enjoy this if she remembers it tomorrow."

This was evidently one of the times. Irene subsided into a chair, into unregarding silence; I sat by the fireplace under the painting of the buffalo; Constance and Gottfried sat down beside their cups.

"What is that beautiful thing you're playing?" I asked. But I had to repeat my question; the dentist had struck a nerve.

It was a work by an Italian twelve-tone composer named — well, Picalilli is the way I remember it, but that can't be right. Gottfried not only wrote and played twelve-tone music, he spoke about it, and spoke not as himself but as a loving propagandist: the sirens couldn't have made out a better case for their songs than Gottfried made for Schönberg's. Sometimes he was so bewitchingly melodious that I wished the recording company had made a photostat of the score and recorded Gottfried.

"He would like Schönberg better if Schönberg had also composed *Giselle,"* Dr. Rosenbaum said to Constance, looking at me with an

indulgent smile. Constance replied that, naturally, I was a little old-fashioned in my tastes; I said in a telling voice, "I like the *Lyric Suite,* don't I?"

We laughed. The *Lyric Suite* was my triumph — Constance's triumph, that is. I had liked *Wozzeck* at first hearing and Berg's violin concerto at the third or fourth: there was no reason I shouldn't like the *Lyric Suite,* as Constance said, and she had made up her mind that I was going to. Whenever she had dinner with us, whenever she came by in the evening, she held in her hand a long-playing record of the *Lyric Suite,* and once each time she played it to us. I would sit and read, sit and talk, sit and dream — at first, I have to admit, I'd sit and suffer; my wife suffered but did not sit — she would say with a vague sidelong smile, "All that darning. . . . Call me when it's over, Constance."

After four or five playings I was getting used to it, my wife did not get up and leave any longer: there were parts we liked very much better than other parts; three or four more times and we liked the other parts — we were, we found, crazy about the *Lyric Suite:* how could any of it ever have seemed hard to us? Constance was very polite, and didn't once say, "When I was young I was the same way about it." So far as the *Lyric Suite* is concerned, we had been foolish and young and Constance old and clever; and we were grateful to her for that best of gifts, a change in one's own self.

But I was willing to thank her simply for existing. She had been for me, always, an almost unmixed blessing; I could have said of her what, in *The Tales of Hoffmann,* the old man says of his daughter: that she is *sage, modeste, et belle.* (I suppose that this should have made me distrust my feeling: the daughter that he says this about is, after all, an automaton of his own making.) As a child Constance had seemed to me more of a fairy tale than the fairy tales I told her: there had been about her a dreaming composure, an essential absence or removedness — she saw something you could not see, had never seen. (She didn't really see it, of course; I know that; but she seemed to see it.) She kept this now only as a queer vagueness of manner. She had this vagueness, some of the time, when she played the piano. She played either dreamily, in absent refuge, or merely correctly, or else with a peremptory objective power that astonished me. When I said something about this to Gottfried he replied: "You see that? Yes, it is very apparent; it is one of the things that interested me about her from the beginning."

Constance said now, "Wake up, you'll be sorry to miss this." I

looked toward the phonograph, but it had shut itself off; it was Dr. Rosenbaum that she meant. He repeated, with a sunny smile: "I shall tell you, inattentive as you are, anyone but you three I would not tell, what is my real ambition: I want some people to come from another planet and to make me their pet."

I thought that this would interest even Irene; it did not. Gottfried went on: "And you too, of course — all three of you."

I said thoughtfully, trying to do justice to his revelation: "You're big for a pet. But it's hard on you, being cleverer than other people — it *is* your turn to be stupider, I suppose."

He answered mockingly, "Ah, how well you put yourself in my place!"

Constance said: "When I was little there were eight steps out in the front of our yard, where the lawn went down to the street — I thought that if I ran up the stairs to the eighth step, at night, and stopped there, then if you asked me any question in the world I would be able to answer it."

"If Gertrude knew that she'd put it in her book about Benton," I said. "That's where she is, on the eighth stair."

"Is she going to write a book about *Benton?"* Constance asked.

"Of *course* she is going to write a book about Benton," said Irene, surprisingly. "If something happens to you, what good is it to have happened, if you do not put it into a book?"

I said, "Don't say anything about it. It'd only make people uneasy — and poor things, they'll know soon enough. Gertrude—"

Constance broke in just at that minute, "Gertrude will—" and Dr. Rosenbaum said in weary amusement, "Oh, Gertrude! She is just like everybody else, only more so. She is like air in tanks — like com— con—"

Constance exclaimed in uneasy incredulity, "Oh *no,* not like *everybody!"* Dr. Rosenbaum said, relenting: "No, not like everybody. But there is a Gertrude inside everybody." Then he shook his head and said heavily, "No, not everybody, but—" He paused, dissatisfied with explanation.

Irene said indifferently: "She is a principle of things, one of the naked ones."

"I think her husband's very nice," Constance said. "I talked to him a lot, that night you took me there. Mostly he's very mild and meek and sweet, the things he says, but every once in a while he says something perfectly *awful.* I think those are just things she's said that he's repeating, though. They're awfully odd together. Why do you suppose she married *him?"*

Gottfried said: "It is lonely without readers. She wanted company."

Irene replied to Constance, in a voice at once vivacious and oracular — she had emerged altogether from her silence — "Have you never seen it before? He is nothing, you see — without her what could he do? He is hers as a baby is its mother's. She is not afraid that he will — will do *anything*. Perhaps he is the first person in her life she has not distrusted. She does not need to be Gertrude, even, to him: if she painted two eyes on her pillow and said to him that it was Gertrude, he would believe it."

"You make it sound scary," Constance said with a little laugh.

"Everyone must have *something*. She belongs to him as the mother belongs to the baby."

I said, "I hate to think what would become of her if anything happened to Sidney."

Gottfried said, though his tone contradicted what he said: *"Hate* to think of it! Where are your principles?"

"What's the good of wasting principles on Gertrude?" I answered; but then I felt disloyal, somehow, and said: "She's a Fact of Nature. I've never known anything like her — oh, I've seen lots of imperfect presentiments of her, but never any more than that. But Irene, you sound as if you'd known people just like her."

Irene answered, "She does not exist in Europe, not in quite this state. She is hidden, or distributed among several, or a man, there. This is because it is a society dominated by men." As she said this last sentence she gave a mocking and confident smile, as if a society dominated by men were her meat.

Her smile changed, and she went on: "Sidney and she, I know the situation *so* well — it is a classical situation — and I have known many people who are like them or like parts of them. When you are as old as I, even if you know nothing of people from good sense, you know too much, terribly too much, simply from acquaintance — types and types and types of those types. When I meet a man on the street I think sometimes: I have known you on three continents for six decades. And, too, what talent I have is for such things as this. You told me that your psychologist Henry James—" I said, "No, William, William" — "that he said that if you wish to feel as a man feels or think as he thinks, you must sit as he sits, and walk as he walks, and hold your head as he holds his head. This is absurd but it is *so* — partly so, only partly so, but so. I have made myself so much into other people that sometimes I look at a person and think — oh, it is an illusion — that I not only am that person, I am tired of being, I have

been so long: to be him is intolerable to me, it is so familiar."

We were silent for a moment. Constance said to Gottfried, suddenly: "Oh, I forgot to show you the Williams. I cut it out — it's in my bag."

Every day Constance turned first to the comic page of the Mount Pleasant *Courier-Sentinel,* and would look at a picture, different every day, called *Out Our Way.* "In the papers out West," Constance told the Rosenbaums, "they call it *Skull Valley.*" The pictures were pictures of cowboys, soldiers, factory workers, fathers and mothers and their children — of things as they are now, and as they used to be thirty or forty years ago. They were drawn by someone who, Constance said, knew *everything* about Americans. She even converted the Rosenbaums to her J. R. Williams, to such an extent that Convert Gottfried came back coughing from the newspaper-files of the public library. "This is the other America," he said. "In Europe they know nothing of this."

He went on to say that in his opinion it was not the real America exactly, but the real America as it remembered itself: *"He* knows so well that they recognize it all, and it stands for all the rest they know. It is a kind of national ideal, therefore in the past." Constance hardly understood him. He always had a great deal of sympathy for the American past; he said that Americans had tried to do what had never before even been tried — perhaps they had failed because it could not be done. Constance understood this not at all; to her America was ordinary reality, what everyone is born into, and the rest of the world romance. She had fallen in love with it at second hand.

We all looked at the Williams drawing: some overalled or coveralled men were staring like another species of being at the ill-clad beauties, one to a calendar, that lined the wall of their machine-shop. Constance said, "Once I had a date with a boy I'd known in college when I was a freshman, he'd got to be an engineer — he took me to this musical comedy and said that all machine-shops are like that, that if he had a sister he'd say to her, 'Always shut your eyes when you go in a machine-shop.' But I've never had the chance to, I've never been in a machine-shop. Except that musical comedy was quite a lot like one, I thought. It was— it was named—"

Constance said like an older woman, "I'll forget my head next. You know it as well as I do. It was that *famous* one, a sort of war love-story on a desert island — you know, the one that had—" Constance hummed part of one of the songs; she had no difficulty remembering the words, which were almost all *I'm in love.* Gottfried laughed,

but the song didn't seem to help him to identify the play; Irene said, "In Europe one knows these things, alas, but here, no"; and Constance said, "The words aren't *that* funny, that part of Lensky's aria I'm so crazy about has the same words, they're just in Russian." Then she asked me, "Oh what *is* it, *you* know."

I said, *"South Pacific."*

"South Pacific!" said Constance happily. "Of course! *of course!* Well, in *South Pacific* whenever they saw a girl, whenever they *thought* of seeing a girl, their mouths watered and so did the audience's, but how could my mouth water? — I was a girl."

"That at least is no different in Europe," Irene said. "We are cakes that must think, *How nice to eat me!* There is a girls' school at Lyons where the students wear long linen nightgowns in the bathtub, but that is very Jansenist of them. Here in your country Art and Commerce and Life are a bitter — no, a sweet pill covered all over with sex; if Moses had lived among you he would have returned to find you worshipping not a Golden Calf but a Golden Girl, and he would have engraved his commandments upon her stomach. But why should I buy a bridge because in the advertisement a girl walks over it without her clothes? Why should I buy a bridge because the man who built it tells me it is the best of bridges?"

"Why should you buy a bridge?" replied Gottfried. He walked over to poke the fire. The Rosenbaums had on their mantel an odd little statuette, a bull cut and twisted from black sheet-metal, that I kept remembering to ask them about whenever I was in bed or taking a bath or playing tennis; now, at last, I saw and asked.

"That is because I am a Bull-Painter, a Steer-Leader!" he answered mockingly. Constance and I looked unenlightened, Irene accustomed, and he told us a story about the siege, during the Peasants' War, of the fortress at Salzburg. The defenders, when they ran out of food, kept leading along the top of the wall their last steer: they would paint it a different color each time and point complacently to it, till finally the peasants went home to their haying — no hope to starve *that* fortress out. While Dr. Rosenbaum delighted in their strategem, Constance asked wonderingly: "But how does that make you a — a Steer-Painter?"

"Because I am born in Salzburg! You mean you don't know I am another Mozart? Oh but I am, I am! When people come to my door and say, 'Unless you write us a song that says I love you, I love you, I love you—' "

Constance said, "No, no— I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love."

"When people come to my door and say, 'Unless you write us a song that says I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love, we don't give you anything to eat,' I shall say to them, 'First I will eat my steer!' "

He pronounced these last words as if he were Odin playing hopscotch; when we laughed he wrapped around him some injured dignity, with a magnificent gesture, and said reproachfully, "Oho, you don't think they ask me to write I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love. Did not they ask Igor Stravinsky to write a polka for the elephants?"

"The elephants?"

"If Stravinsky writes elephant-polkas you think *I* cannot write I'm in love?"

Irene said, "Avenge yourself upon them all — write it this moment, Gottfried!"

"No, I will write another *Civilization!"* This song was the only popular song that Gottfried liked, but he liked it enough to make up for the others. He sang it like Koussevitzky being the Greatest Master of the Double-Bass; after I had heard him singing *Bongo Bongo Bongo, I don't want to leave the Congo* — or, almost better, *Bingle Bangle Bungle, I'm so happy in the jungle* — I hardly minded not having got to hear Paganini and Liszt and Farinelli.

He was beginning on it, in loving tones, when Constance said equally lovingly: "Do you know what I think, Dr. Rosenbaum?"

"No, what?"

"I think that you are a child."

"That is what you Americans think of all of us," Dr. Rosenbaum said soberly.

"All of us? You mean Austrians or Europeans?"

"Zulus!" cried Dr. Rosenbaum. "Zulus!" He was happy in his jungle.

I said regretfully, "Here's the Rilke," and opened it to the poem I was working on. "Can't Constance help?" Irene asked in a useful voice.

"Don't make fun of him," Gottfried answered. "He would not like German half so well if he should learn it. There is no such happiness as not to know an idiom from a master-stroke. And all that we say was once a master-stroke — he has gone back to the first days of the earth."

"Gee, you're mean," said Constance. "I wish *I* knew as much German as he does."

I looked gratefully at her, but it was the worst thing anybody had

said. I repeated, "Here's the Rilke," and we got to work. After a while Gottfried said in a wondering voice: "But this is extremely strange. It is not arranged correctly, but — Irene, whom is *this* like that we have talked about tonight?" He read:

> Braucht nicht der Mond, damit sich sein Abbild in Dorfteich fände, des Fremden Gestirns grosse Erscheinung?

Then he translated for Constance: "Does not the moon need, in order that it may be reflected in village ponds — must not the moon have the strange star's great apparition? It is a little wrong for Gertrude and Sidney, with them it is a case of the strange star needing the moon's reflection in the village ponds, but the whole somehow—"

"Oh, it's right, just *exactly* right!" said Constance.

6.

Those days Constance filed, typed, stamped envelopes, did anything else that the President, the President's secretary, anyone else could find for her to do; and while she wasn't filing and stamping and typing, she sat and looked at the circumstances of her life in content. Back before the War, the Revolution, or the Fall, before we grew up or were born, before *something,* we knew the bliss of being without wishes, and would have answered the angel that guarded us, if he had asked, "What is your blessing?" — would have answered: "That things are as they are, not otherwise." What one day didn't give the next supplied: when she woke in the night Constance reached out and touched her life and, comforted, went back to sleep.

Gottfried and Irene were Constance's Fairy Postmen: her days were dappled with letters and packages and postcards, and all the stamps were foreign. She said often, those days: "To think that only six months ago I'd never heard of—" some name would follow. Even Else grew too used to her to mind her much, and the Rosenbaums' Persian would come and roll on her feet and, looking back, walk off toward the ice-box.

She never knew what the Rosenbaums would talk about, or what they would say about it when they did. Dr. Rosenbaum liked being a Steer-Leader, but he talked of the Dual Monarchy with more contempt than nostalgia, saying that it was his "ambition to be unjust to Austria." One night, after reading a kind of Pindaric ode to Metternich, in prose, that he had come on in a magazine, he said to Constance that the author "thinks that Europe has occurred to him, but not to someone else before. That young *Spiessbürger* should get a job with Salazar.

And yet, he has reason — he is full of reasons: as the proverb says, *I killed your cat because she ate my cow.*"

"Is that an Austrian proverb?" asked Constance eagerly.

"A Rosenbaum proverb," Irene replied, with resignation; Dr. Rosenbaum, like Swift, made up proverbs. Then she said something, in Russian, that Constance did not know the meaning of and that Dr. Rosenbaum did not know the words of, but that was very familiar to him: it *was* a proverb, one that meant *Heaven gives us habits to take the place of happiness.* Yet as she said it she looked almost baskingly at him, like a seal. She often had this sleek animal look; and her eyes would look soulful, but not, then, as if the soul were a human soul.

Dr. Rosenbaum sat uneasily ruminating, his own eyes very human; he began to reminisce about Metternichs. The old Princess Metternich used to buy pastry at a shop across the street from his room, in the days when he had been a student, he told Constance; he described her and described her car, and finished: "In good weather I could look down into the automobile. On a pole that fitted into a socket, there was a standard like the Imperial standard. Their gratitude was not short-lived."

He pronounced this last sentence with an ironic, dismissing smile; but after a little he stirred restlessly, and murmured: "It was a Mercedes, I think." Constance said: "Oh yes," brightly; she had never felt farther from him. Something was going on inside Dr. Rosenbaum, it was plain; he said to her a minute later, "Have you ever looked out of a window and seen, at seven o'clock on a morning of spring, in the middle of an avenue of linden blossoms, an officer in a white uniform coming home from a ball, in a helmet with white plumes? A *blond* one?"

Constance said that she had not; and Gottfried said thoughtfully, "Nor have I. At least, I can no longer believe that I saw it. And I *detested* them — their stupidity was truly more than human. But — but I wish that there were one, on one morning, for you to see. Talleyrand was right, my child: if you have not lived under the old dispensation you have not tasted the Sweetness of Life." Then he laughed at himself.

His wife laughed at him too, and said to Constance, looking at her oddly: "This is not so, *entirely* not so. When we are young we all live for a time under that dispensation. And yet everyone has always felt so about his own age and the ages: nostalgia is the permanent condition of man."

But the Rosenbaums talked surprisingly little about such dispensations. Flo Whittaker had once gently reproved Dr. Rosenbaum for his attitude toward politics. She had done so by quoting to him, in tones that rather made for righteousness, a line of poetry that she had often seen quoted in this connection: "We must love one another or die." Gottfried replied: "We must love one another *and* die." And he had once ended a long half-hour's political lecture — conversation, the speaker would have called it — by saying to the speaker: "Nijinsky said, *Politics is Death.* Is that right?" The man looked at him speechlessly, and he said: "Is that right? You say politics *is* in English? *Is,* not *are?"*

Once Constance asked him whether he had known that peculiarly Austrian composer Richard Strauss. She had asked him long before, of course, about Berg and Schönberg and Mahler. (He had said to her about the last: "Or Berlioz? How old do you think me, my child? Yes, Mahler knew me: when he looked up into the topmost gallery of the *Hofoper* I am sure that he could distinguish little Gottfried Rosenbaum from the other *Wunderkinder* who were about to become Mahler.") But now he replied drily: "He knew that I existed. I do not know whether he would have said of me what he said of Schönberg: 'But you have talent — why should *you* compose atonally?'" Then his face clouded; perhaps he thought he knew. But he spoke of some of Strauss's music with great respect, and did not even complain, every time that he mentioned him, of the size of his orchestras. (Dr. Rosenbaum's own orchestras had often been mistaken for quintets.)

Irene talked of the old days more vivaciously, and in *much* better English. Though Dr. Rosenbaum's was pretty good except for the sounds: what it needed was re-scoring. She told Constance once, "I learned English from an Englishwoman in Orel. We had her as one has a cow, for the children. They tell me that I did — I cannot remember not knowing English and French."

She had been radical to begin with. "There was nothing I wanted so much as a Revolution," she said with a laugh beyond either humor or sadness. She had had a long enough and an eventful enough life for Constance to have almost everything in it wrong; Irene would say, "Ah no, my dear, Prague was ten years after Dresden," and Constance would laugh and say — she had said it timidly, the first time — that Irene should have been arranged alphabetically, like the *Britannica.* Anything that Irene and Gottfried did nowadays was only an inconsequential appendix or coda, like that volume of the encyclopedia that

is sent to subscribers every five years, to bring them up to the present as best it can; even Constance could see that, in some real sense, the Rosenbaums' lives were over.

Irene still would sing for Dr. Rosenbaum — would, occasionally, for my wife and me; sometimes she let Constance accompany her. She sang the *Songs and Dances of Death* and *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* and that other of Mahler's that begins *Man lies in sorest need,* songs from *Eugen Onegin* and from Rimsky-Korsakoff operas that we had not heard even the names of, Wolf and Mozart and Verdi and Schubert and Schumann. She would say apologetically, "It is only to amuse myself. I remember old times."

When she sang you decided that a singer does after all need a voice to sing, but you did not decide this until several minutes after she had finished singing. Even her breathing was unmistakable, so that her hearers would feel, in senseless pleasure: "Who else in all the world would have thought of breathing *there?"* She did what she did because there was nothing else possible to do, and when she had done it she did not know what she had done: or so you felt, hearing. This was a delusion, of course; she once talked for half an hour about Lehmann's, Schiotz's, and *her* ways of singing the song from the *Dichterliebe* that begins, *Ich grolle nicht.*

In any art there is a Higher Regularity which seems to conventional people arbitrary and to unconventional people commonplace: Irene's singing was of this sort. And of all the singers I have ever heard she was the most essentially dramatic: she could not have sung a scale without making it seem a part of someone's life, a thing of human significance. Yet when the song and her voice said: *We are all dying,* something else about her voice — a quality that could not be localized, that all the sounds possessed together and none possessed apart — said to you also: *Whoever dies?* Over feeling and act, the human reality, her voice seemed to open out into a contradicting magic of speculation and belief, into the inhuman reality men discover or create. Her voice pushed back the boundaries of the world.

She was an old woman and Constance a girl, yet her grace and lightness (when she was light and graceful — often she sat there like a stone) made Constance seem to herself lumpish; and when the older woman talked to the younger with soaring gaiety, with a courage beyond any event, beyond even knowing itself courage, it seemed to the girl that the woman's voice said to her that life is uncreated and will not be destroyed — said softly, without accompaniment: *Believe, believe, my heart!*

7.

What Gertrude said about the people of Benton did not trouble me. News was good news: I had listened too long to what *they* had to say. That Dr. Crowley should leave flowers and candy and bon-voyage baskets outside the front door of Dr. Willen's bungalow, watching from the bushes, shyly, as Dr. Willen ejaculated: "Well, I *never*—" that this should happen did credit, I thought, to Dr. Crowley, and to Dr. Willen, and to Gertrude. To Gertrude especially: it was as though I had learned that Gertrude had written *Peter Rabbit.*

What she told people about Constance and Dr. Rosenbaum was different. I would have begged her not to say it, if I had known beforehand that she was going to, and yet what good would it have done? I started to say, "Gertrude, how could even *you*"— yet what good would that have done? What good did anything do, with Gertrude?

When Constance heard what Gertrude Johnson was saying about her and about Dr. Rosenbaum, she couldn't believe it; she would have been no more surprised if Gertrude had said that she was having an affair with Gertrude. Why, Dr. Rosenbaum was old enough to be not simply her father but her grandfather, practically, and he was a — a respected composer. It was the reflection on the Rosenbaums that dismayed her most: imagine saying such a thing about *Dr. Rosenbaum!* She herself was just a girl of no importance to anybody else in the world, and besides — she thought in ignorant confidence — no one would believe such a thing of *her.*

The first time Constance met Gertrude alone on the campus she said hello to her and stopped and waited, expectantly, till Gertrude had stopped. They were two small shapes under the oaks, one of them in a modest tweed skirt and her best cashmere sweater, the other in more bohemian garb. Constance said to Gertrude in a measured voice, the voice of a girl measuring her first shortening for her first cake, the sentence she had prepared: "You shouldn't speak as you do, Miss Johnson—" no, that was wrong — "as I'm told you do, Miss Johnson, about Dr. Rosenbaum."

Gertrude looked at her in stupefaction, and Constance looked back like the Children's Crusade. Then this terrible warrior — who was quite as willing to do anything whatsoever as she was to say anything whatsoever; who had, everybody said, once chased a guest down the steps of her own front porch, striking at the woman with the candlestick she had picked up from the dinner-table; whom you could have deterred from having affairs with all the members of the Cabinet simply by saying, "Gertrude, it would shock people more if you seduced

the Supreme Court" — then Gertrude did nothing, said nothing. She seemed to feel almost as a big dog does when it won't fight a puppy: finally she looked Constance in the eyes, smiled, and said indifferently: "Speaking as I should would be quite a departure for *me*." But then she gave a helpless marvelling laugh and said: "Is this *really* your idea of how to — Oh, don't worry, nobody would believe anything about *you*." Constance said, "It isn't—" and Gertrude said, "Oh, don't *you* worry," laughed again, and walked away. But the second laugh had been as queer as the first. Constance thought them both laughs of embarrassment; so, for her, that was the end of that.

But why *had* Gertrude done nothing? She was no big dog, Constance was no puppy. Proust says, in an unexpected sentence, that the commonest thing in the world is kindness: is it so common that, somewhere in Gertrude too, neglected and frustrated and despised, there was a shred of this primitive kindness — a little shame, a little guilt, a little grief? President Robbins had never had time to be human, Gertrude had never wanted to be; but perhaps, like it or not, both of them were human.

8.

Constance once had asked Irene, "Do you understand why Gottfried—" and Irene had broken in: "Understand? Gottfried? I have never understood him — but then I have never needed to understand him."

Constance did not understand this; after a while she forgot it. Most of Gottfried seemed to her *beyond* her, of course, but the rest of him she understood or didn't even need to understand, it was so plain. He was as fat and open and goodhumored as a comedian: he moved in reassuring familiarity, an old joke recollected on a fine day.

It is hard to believe that any other cellist could look as good as the cellist of the Budapest Quartet, but Gottfried looked better: you could see every note. And he looked more like an orangoutang, too. He had that animal's fixed, sorrowful, bottomless stare — though the little incidents of the score would lift his spirits immeasurably, and bring a fleeting smile to his lips, as if his keeper had just brought him a banana.

Whenever Gottfried played the cello I would remember how he looked the first time I ever saw him. He was sitting on a beach in red knitted swimming-trunks, he wore over his shoulders an army surplus blanket, and he stared out to sea. The look on his face was one of passive sadness; his hand, a small hand for so big a man, hung down into the hole he had been digging as though it had never moved, could never move.

He was introduced simply as Dr. Rosenbaum. I thought him some physician saddened by the death of all his patients, but after a while I could see that, patients or not, he didn't care. It was windy in the cottage of our host, but who else would have shut himself into the closet to light his cigars? Even the children seemed to feel that there were the children, the grown-ups, and Gottfried.

His wife arrived that afternoon. I said to Gottfried, "Why, you're *Gottfried* Rosenbaum!" He said, "You *are* musical"; and exclaimed in a voice of solemn grandeur to Irene: "I have lived for a thousand years beneath your shade, you Pyramid!"

"Who remembers Letscheskinskaya?" Irene asked cheerfully. Then she said to me with delicate, confiding, majestic sorrow: "I am old." She gave a wonderful purity to the *o* of *old*.

I laughed: a man watching me through a telescope would have cried out, "There's a delighted man!" Irene gave to her good audience the tender smile of the professional, and I saw that, thin as she was, old as she was, she had kept in the middle of each reddened cheek a dimple.

I heard a woman say about them, later that day: "They're an absurd couple," and this vexed me. But of course they were: Irene occasionally and willfully, Gottfried systematically.

You can do anything with children if you will only play with them, as Gottfried was fond of saying; but he did not want to do anything with them except play with them. His automatic acceptance of everybody was a judgment of mankind crueller, perhaps, than Gertrude's impatient rejection of everybody. She had great expectations for humanity, expectations which any human being disappointed; anybody satisfied Gottfried's expectations. The thought of how he had acquired these expectations was a disagreeable one.

He told you everything, always; Irene was often silent or oracular; after a few years you knew Irene, and had more facts than you knew what to do with about Gottfried, so many more that you wished you could go back to the days when you hadn't known so much, and still had had a chance to understand him. (A man as open as *this* must be hiding something; and something as big as Gottfried, even, could have been hiding behind something as big as Gottfried.) But then — you felt just as Irene did — you did not need to understand him.

He had an extravagant and impartial humor, a relish for telling the truths that are themselves jokes, that was to most people the only disquieting thing about him. It seemed to them, almost, inconsequence or malignity: if he had not been a joke himself, they would have found

it hard to forgive some of his jokes. Besides making jokes, he made guesses. As you were telling him what some friend of yours had said or done, he would break in and tell *you* — and he was right disconcertingly often. When I asked him how he did it he replied: "I only make jokes. When people would tell me about their friends, in the middle of what they said I would think of what would be right for a joke, and say it, but it would be true. So now I say it for the truth."

He was one of the best-humored of men, but sometimes his humor was out of gear: at those times he looked at what was without any humor, good or ill, with a joyless transparency, and what was remained what it had been. And he was inhumanly disinterested. Many of us have learned to detach our vanity from our opinions, and to join it to the part of us that discards these if it can see that they are false. But with Gottfried it was more than this: he not only tried to judge himself as he judged others, his works as he judged theirs, he managed to do so. About the killing of six million European Jews, even, he spoke with detachment. He said to my wife and me: "I can understand killing them. We have our faults. Six million Jews are, after all, six million people." But then his face distorted itself into vivacity, and he exclaimed: "But those poor *gipsies!* What had *they* done? — told people's fortunes, stole people's cows. When I heard that Hitler had killed them all, I thought like Peer Gynt, 'Nature is witty, oh so witty — but economical, no, that she isn't!' Imagine! The *gipsies* of Europe! It is hard for me not to say: 'I do not want to live in a world that has killed off all the gipsies.'"

Sometimes as you look at someone who has no notion that he is being looked at, his body seems to be saying, without any help from him, without any expectation of an answer, in passive helplessness: "What am I doing here?" Gottfried's, though, seemed to be saying in half-humorous, half-rueful astonishment: "What am I doing *here?*" He was a remarkably polite listener, and nodded all the time you spoke, as if to make his listening visible. After you had finished he would give a last nod different from the rest, his eyebrows raised a little, his lips pursed a little, his head akimbo like a dog's in a movie: it was almost as if he were waiting to hear something else; then he would reply, or go on to his next joke, or wait a moment for yours. Once as I looked at that final nod I thought of two lines from a poem, a poem about the call a bird gives:

> The question that he frames almost in words
> Is what to make of a diminished thing.

But what was the thing that had diminished? The world? Gottfried himself? I did not know.

9.

The Russian Irene, the Austrian Gottfried, the Bavarian Else, the Persian Tanya — the cat was named Tanya — these and the Simca, a French car manufactured under Italian patents, often made me think of Europe and America, the Old World and the New. To think of such things is a confession of ignorance, and I was not so ignorant as not to know that; but I couldn't help myself. I thought about them, talked about them, even. When Gottfried cut his cantaloupe into squares with a knife and put sugar on the squares, it was as if I had seen Europe buckling into the Alps: I would feel, *How very European!* and then try to recall whether it was European or just Gottfried; the same thing happened with Irene; and with Tanya I must often have felt, *How very Persian!* when really it was only cat.

It was hard to know whether to be just or patriotic. As you thought of Else you could be both: a Tasmanian, as he thought of Else, could have felt proud of the past and confident of the future. But sometimes as you thought about Gottfried you felt your trust in yourself shaken: it seemed to you too late to do anything about yourself — as much, that is, as needed to be done — and you felt that it wasn't just Gottfried, but Europe. Gottfried knew more than you did, and could do more with what he knew; and when you looked for a clause, beginning with *but,* that would end the sentence in your favor, you could not find one.

Yet a way of life is a way of escaping from perception, as well as of perceiving. Here in the midst of your own world you noticed all the things that Gottfried didn't notice, and that you did; that Gottfried didn't distinguish from one another, and that you did. And his godmothers had given Gottfried, along with everything else, a gift for organizing even these blind spots into a system — the last had said to him, smiling: "My child, you shall never be at a loss for long." He made generalizations even when he didn't have anything in particular to make them with; and he understood so well what things necessarily are that he didn't see, sometimes, what they accidentally were. Yet all this was characteristic not so much of Gottfried as of his kind — one noticed it in Irene too; and when Gottfried was least his kind he was most Gottfried.

Their kind was a European kind. In ungracious moments I felt that their minds were traps in which things came to an already-agreed-upon end; and they must have felt that my mind was so open that

things streamed through it without coming to any conclusion at all. (*I* felt that they must have felt this: but how easily we give to others the understanding of our own qualities that only we possess!) It seemed to me that the Rosenbaums had made up their minds, and that I hadn't. Sometimes a judgment of Gottfried's would make me think with a despairing laugh, "He's only a European after all." I never thought about any of my judgments, "I'm only an American after all," but Irene and Gottfried may have.

I hated to come to anything so uncongenial, so un-American, as a theoretical conclusion — to anything so theoretical and conclusive as a theoretical conclusion. I felt (to put it in my own terms, which were more than fair to me) that it is better to entertain an idea than to take it home to live with you for the rest of your life. But I sat surrounded by the results of doing the opposite: the light I read by, the furnace that kept turning itself on and off to warm me, the rockets that at that moment were being tested to defend me from the rockets that at that moment were being tested to attack me, all were the benefits of coming to theoretical conclusions; I was a living — still living — contradiction.

Yet when I thought of Irene and Gottfried and myself — or for that matter, when I thought of Else and myself — in the terms of the old American comparison of Europeans and Americans, something was wrong. They were smarter than I, and I was better than they? Their sophistication had, unfortunately, made them bad, just as my naiveté had, fortunately, kept me good? To believe this I would have had to be good and naive. I repeated with mixed feelings the definition of an American I remembered — remembered inaccurately, I imagine — from the novels of Henry James: an American is someone who says *I guess* and is better than Europeans. I liked having my own continent win this moral victory over another, but I wished that it had won in all the novels: in European ones, I remembered, an American is someone who says *I guess*.

And yet — and yet . . . There was a hardness and matter-of-factness about Europeans, sometimes, an accustomed dismissal of what no one could dismiss — no one, surely, ever become accustomed to — that I was troubled by: they brushed life aside as though they themselves were life, and could afford to do as they chose with it. Marianne Moore has said about New York, that treasure-hoard which Americans lie with their tails around, growling at one another — has said about New York, even: "It is not the plunder but/ accessibility to experience." That said, almost, what I wanted to say about Americans.

They had, so far, no armor against fate — for riches and bombers and empire aren't armor, but only fate. There was something helpless and noticing about Americans, a few Americans, that I liked; something happened to them, sometimes, and they looked at it and were at a loss, for long, for long. They did not understand it; and it takes a young and ignorant race not to understand something, when so many different ways of understanding it already exist. The sheltered and ignorant can, sometimes, make concessions, show a kind of tentativeness and forbearance, there on their little strip between the rocks and the stream, that those making a bare living from the rocks, escaping with their bare lives from the stream — that *they* less easily can. Yet I had to admit, about some of the American qualities I liked best, that they were so rare in Americans that it might almost have been better to look for them in — but no, that way madness lay!

As you talk about your own qualities you are always rather a comic figure, and I must have been one as I talked about the qualities of Americans. There was an *I did not know what* about American qualities: as you heard me talk about them, trying to say what it was, you did not think as usual, *He's a true American,* but were impressed with how subtle I could be — you could see that, with all our faults, we Americans were still, in some sense, *better.*

. . . There is no good resting-place between Man and men: to say that someone is typically anything is an unfavorable judgment, and even the oddest of foreigners cannot help seeming to us, in some ways, typically foreign. We despair of any nationality except our own, and we don't despair of it only because we don't take it seriously — we know that, at bottom, Americans are just people, a little more so than any foreigner ever manages to be; didn't Adam and Eve and the snake speak to each other in Standard American? Adam and Eve and the snake have a different story, but this is ours. Foreigners tell it with the names changed, it is theirs, then, but it is the same story. All of us reason about and understand what people necessarily must be; we dream about, are bewitched by, what they accidentally and incomprehensibly are.

I decided that Europeans and Americans are like men and women: they understand each other worse, and it matters less, than either of them suppose. But I thought of what seemed to me a way to get a detached, objective judgment about Europeans and Americans: I asked a Chinese acquaintance of mine. He seemed puzzled by my question; I repeated it; and he replied in a high astonished voice: "There's no difference. No difference at all." He meant to say this; really he said *diffience.*

This left me more confused than ever about Europeans and Americans, but for a moment I was sure about Chinese.

10.

To Constance the Good Europeans Gottfried and Irene were never confusing, only wonderful. If they had burned their house down on Midsummer Eve and told her that Austrians always did, Constance would have danced off with the news and stored it under Austrians, Customs of, somewhere in the happy filing-system of her head. It was a strange thing to do, but they were strangers — *her* strangers. When you admire a grandee's mountain range and he says to you, *It is yours,* it is not the gift that matters, not the manners that matter; he might just as well be a bandit chieftain saying to you, *No Roumi has set foot on that mountain since the days of the Prophet!* God is the Wholly Other: that others are now, were, and ever shall be, world without end, *different* — what else is Romance?

Someone at a travelogue cannot help feeling, even if he knows better: "Lucky coolies, to be there in the midst of the romance of the East!" But they aren't in it, they are it, so it is no good to them. In the same way I could not help feeling: "Lucky Constance, to be there in the midst of Innocence!" I did not know at all what it was like to be Constance, and I did not want to know; if I could have found out I might have felt, like the Dauphin in the story: "Why, if that's so, to be Dauphin is *nothing!*" And Irene was no better; she would look at Constance or at me in surprise and disappointment when one of us responded to something just as she would have responded — she *liked* us different. That the soldiers in the barracks at Chanute Field had called me *Tex* did not seem half so funny to Gottfried as it seemed to my wife and me: how willingly he would have learned that I had been reared by an old buffalo named Cheiron!

Constance loved, as a nice young American student of the piano should love, a book by a nice young American student of the piano named Amy Fay, who lived from teacher to teacher in the Germany of the '70's, and wrote a winning account of Liszt; from Constance's comments about the book you could see that she not only identified herself with Amy Fay, but Gottfried with Liszt. (Amy Fay wouldn't have minded, but ah, Liszt!) Constance could not help feeling that the Russian-ness and Austrian-ness and Past-ness of the Rosenbaums were of the same use to them that they were to her, just as we look at an old photograph and feel that the people in it must surely have had some intimation of how old-fashioned they were, of the fact that their

problems were not *really* problems — we feel this even when the photograph is a photograph of corpses, strewn in their old-fashioned uniforms along an old-fashioned trench.

Constance was in love with what the Rosenbaums seemed to be; what they were she might have loved less or loved more.

They were, in the first place, what they seemed to be, just as a beautiful woman in an evening dress is first of all what she seems to be. But underneath her dress, on one side of her stomach, is the scar of an operation for appendicitis; some of the skin below it, of the skin along her thighs, has a grained or marbly look — this came from the strain of childbirth; and her teeth would not be so regular and magnificent as they are if she had not worn braces on them, an unwilling child. There is a reality behind the outer reality; it is no more real than the other, both are as real as real can be, but it is different. All this part of the Rosenbaums: the part that bears and passively suffers and merely exists, so that the other can live and sparkle in the sun; the seamy side, the side with the seams that show how the dress was put together; the seams at which the dress comes apart — all this Constance could not see. Or rather, would not see: she glimpsed it now and then, for the time it took her to catch her breath, but then she would shut her eyes, and open them, and it was as if it had never been.

To Constance the Rosenbaums seemed as wonderful as Life, but really they were only as wonderful as life, that short blanket, that mixed blessing, that, that—

Gertrude had impressed me by talking about a "definition by ostentation"; she said, rather mockingly but rather goodhumoredly, that it was just the thing for me. "How do you do it?" I asked. She answered: "You simply point."

"That *is* just the thing for me," I admitted. I felt that a definition by ostentation was almost as good as none.

To Gertrude a definition by ostentation was almost as bad as none; and how often, for how many things, she had had to take it or none! To her the world was one of those stupid riddles whose only point is that they have no point. It was a knot she could not untie; and she was not willing, as many people are, to pretend that she could, but wanted to cut it or, better still, give up and throw it down and stamp on it. A good child will work away at a knot in its shoelace for all eternity. Gertrude was a spoiled one, and knew it, and knew that the world soon stops spoiling children, except in the other sense of the word. In that sense she was a thing spoiled beyond repair, marred

forever in the making; and she did not know whether the world had made her or whether she had made herself, so she blamed both.

Gottfried and Irene, unlike her, never had sleepless nights on principle. They had come to accept things, and themselves too, for what they were, though what they were would have seemed to them the most extraordinary thing in the world if it had not been the most ordinary. Gertrude pushed everything away with the nausea of a suicide-note: "The whole thing is *impossible.*" "*Yoh,* the whole thing is impossible," Gottfried would have replied in his grainy, wheezing voice. "But what has that to do with it? It is and I am; here I am."

And yet the Rosenbaums found things, often, rather hard. If this seems inconsistent, one can reply: Were they not exiles? Were they not old? Was not Gottfried a man and Irene a woman?

And they did not like America so well as one would have wished them to like it; they were used to different things. Irene, for instance, had a name that is pronounced *i RAY ne,* more or less, over most of Europe; here in America she was called I REEN. This became for her a little mocking symbol. She hardly cared what she was called, other things being equal, but she could not help feeling that the world is named *i RAY ne* and that Americans call it I REEN.

Irene had once come down to breakfast and found her hostess serving sausages to a famous American scholar, a hearty man who had interrupted Irene's first sentence, one acknowledging their introduction, by saying cordially, "Just call me *you!*"

"*What* shall I call you?" asked Irene, her voice rising.

"Just call me *you.*"

Irene looked helplessly at her hostess, who said in a kind voice: "He wants you to call him *you.*"

"*You?*"

"That's his first name, *you. H, U, G, H — you.*"

Irene gave a long sigh; when Gottfried met her at the station the next day she shook hands with him and said, "How do you do, Dr. Rosenbaum."

Gottfried was puzzled, but went along with her game far enough to reply: "Haven't we met before?"

Irene answered, "In five years I call you Gottfried," and went on to explain.

I have heard Gottfried remark about Travel: "There is no need; wait, and they chase you all the way around the world." But sometimes, to Irene, America hardly seemed the world at all. She believed in (though she didn't usually bother to say them) some of the most

familiar clichés of European settlers in America: that American vegetables look better than they taste; that we have a disproportionate admiration for Youth ("you Americans do not rear children, you *incite* them; you give them food and shelter and applause"); that we believe in Education and distrust anybody who is educated; and so on and so on and so on — she would probably have repeated half the things in Tocqueville, if pressed. I remember saying to her one evening, when she was talking about American education: "You mustn't judge other American colleges by Benton — plenty of other American colleges are hardly progressive at all."

She replied: "But may I not judge your grammar schools, your — I have forgotten what you call a *gymnasium* — your high schools by Benton? I have read that many of them are progressive like it. And if they are, surely in the end the others will be: perhaps Benton is the college of the future."

While I sat staring at this prospect Gottfried told us about a speech which he had once read, a speech which the Emperor Wilhelm II, back during the '90's, had made to the teachers and parents of Germany. Gottfried said, smiling: "He asked — he *implored* them not to make their children study so hard, for many of the children had had their eyes ruined by their studies, and were no more good for soldiers. Your own American education is, I believe, of all the educations that have yet been devised the best for the eyes of the children."

And yet Irene liked America too: as she said to Constance, parodying a line of poetry that had attracted her, "In the United States, there one feels free." But she spoiled it by continuing, "Except from the Americans — but every pearl has its oyster." She stood looking out at the oyster restlessly. She could never bear to sit still for long, to sit for long: sitting down reminded her that her occupation was gone. Then she said to Constance in an elegiac voice: "We at least have the memory of having had a world that respected us; that respected us — as a symbol, perhaps — whether or not it knew what we were doing." She was old and entered into things hardly at all, and looked around her with unsympathizing eyes; her eyes were disinterested, but they were also rather uninterested.

And yet sometimes as one listened to Irene her voice seemed to say, as the voices in one of Mahler's pieces say (after a long pause, softly): *Believe, believe, my heart!* But it was only the believing of the heart she believed in: her *Believe!* was without accompaniment, was for the human voice accompanied only by human voices. Perhaps these are enough; perhaps, enough or not enough, there is nothing

else to have; but for her they were not enough.

She said about singing: "When you have learned to sing, it is too late. . . . These American singers are right to sing as they do, it saves them years. Centuries perhaps." She particularly delighted in a singer called Thomas James Joseph, or James Thomas Joseph, or something equally apostolic-sounding; she said of him, "Ah, poor un-Doubting Thomas! He is not even a bull, he is a cow: he *moos.*" Then she mooed; and old and delicate and mocking as she was, for a moment she was that sober, homely, undoubting cow.

She said to me about American compositions: "There is a picture that one sees, a picture with an old man, and a man, and a little boy — they have drums and he a piccolo, and they are all ragged. I do not know its name."

I said, "It's called 'The Spirit of '76.' "

"The part that I like least in your American compositions is the part where these people come into the piece. Why should a piano concerto, or a ballet, or a description of how dawn comes over your American prairies, need always a little march with a piccolo?"

I said, "It's put into the piece to show that it's an American piece." Irene replied, "Ah, no doubt. It is like that little sign *Made in America* that one sees on objects — without it, perhaps, the piece could not be exported."

There were three or four American singers she was fond of — she had records of them and went to their concerts — but she did not let these spoil the fine sweep of her remarks about American singers. She said: "What you should do with American singers is to send them to Europe when they are about, I think, five. After all, they are only people — they would make singers like anybody else, *nicht wahr?*"

When Gottfried said, "My wife was considered a very good and a somewhat — somewhat *difficult* singer," you could see what he meant. But the fine arch of her eyebrows broke, her hand — raised in her own version of the gesture with which the *danseur noble* points out the accomplishments of his partner — fell to her lap and stayed there, and she said in a different voice: "Here you truly think — no, it is worse than that, you not only think, you *feel* —that you can find what is beautiful, or right, or true, by asking everybody, and some people will say one thing and some another, and what the most people say, *that* is what is beautiful and right and true. So in the end there is no more true, no more right, no more beautiful, there is only what the most people say." But she made her indictment indifferently — and smiled, as she finished, a smile of settled and indifferent discontent.

Her daemon no longer possessed her; it had not left her, but had nothing to do and nowhere to go, and it and she sat together all day wearying each other.

She found, now, nothing by which she could be possessed. But she still looked; some days she spent looking — looking silently, seeing nothing except what she did not see. She was a bow waiting, in dust and cobwebs, for someone to come along and string it; and no one came, no one would ever come.

J. C. CREWS:

Stommer Bulltoven Crown

Stommer hell loose woeing the sun
this canticle was meant for you
scoffer though you may have been
pussy baiter though you surely were

The war exerted an evil eye
though the year was shot
before it began
chagrin was our molten crown
cringing no vice in our full agenda

Lindamyra playing you for a full fool
rum full though you surely were

And then Bulltoven
Bully Mac Bulltoven
cursing against the sky
cursing the bridge, the bow
his bloody bones no doubt
are cursing still

But you, Stommer, hell loose as I have said
hell loose but woeing
the naked sun

THOMAS McGRATH:

Perpetual Motion

One, one
Lives all alone,
Shape of the body's
Tree of bone.

Two, two
Can make the world do;
In youth, in youth,
But not in truth.

Three, three
And the body tree
Fades in the forest
Of company.

Three, three,
Society,
Will do, will do,
But not for two.

Since two, two
In love, withdraw;
Wish to be one,
To live alone,

But all must come
To the skeleton,
And one and one
Live all alone.

VASSAR MILLER:

Epitaph for a Cripple

Feet that, fumbling, go
No way of your own will —
Numb with eternity
You now have gained your goal.

Fingers writhed from weaving
Like crabs with claws torn loose —
You mold in your unmoving
The perfect shape of peace.

Tongue entangled in
The ravels of confusion —
You have learned silence soon,
The language of precision.

Body, wry reproach
To athlete mind, lie down —
Your lubber's limbs here couch
Graced with the state of stone.

ISABELLA GARDNER:

Reveille for a Rockinghorse Poet

Don't "trot trot to Bost
on" child. Gallop to Bordeaux.
Not every bell change has been rung
nor every monster seen.

Hunt the Whale the Grail the Fleece
Kiss the cockatrice in Greece.

Don't "trot trot to market" child. Canter through Cockaigne
Single foot to Samarcand and steeple chase in Spain
though faraway translates to mean
(in the Zulu tongue)
"that place where someone cries out O
mother I am lost."

The Sloth

"Body very hairy, tenaceous of life."
— Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778)

Two centuries ago Linnaeus said "noise frightful, tears pitiful" of you,
bungled one. Arm over hairy arm you travel having no heels to
take to on your unsoled feet, no hole to hide in, and no way to fight.
Doomed to the trees, "good food for many," your one safety is in flight.

Today the scarce and lonely sloth, obedient prisoner in space,
astonished by perpetual pain looks askingly into my face
and hangs by legs and arms to life inexorably upside down
under branches in the zoo or in the subway under town.

RICHARD G. STERN:
Pound as Translator

EZRA POUND: *The Spirit of Romance.* New Directions.
The Translations of Ezra Pound. New Directions.

The Spirit of Romance is Pound's "shortish account" of some major works of the Romance literatures between the troubabours and Camoëns. It was first issued in 1910 and has been neither superseded nor matched in the interim. Considering that an enormous amount of work has been done on nearly everyone discussed in the book since that time (including articles by Pound), this is a unique tribute. No other short book of the kind has ever managed to cover so much territory and yet convince the reader that the whole was, if not a continuum, at least a kind of *Zollverein* presided over by an extremely efficient and knowledgeable official. This is to say that the book hangs together — and hangs together less because of the "definite plan" which Pound claims for it, than because he was already, at twenty-five, able to examine a large body of complex material, sift it with sympathy and render judgment on it with authority and brilliance.

Pound is not an original critic in the sense that he provides a radically new way of reading a text or of looking at a period. Yet he is important in critical history as a sort of bridge between the textual reading of nineteenth-century scholarship and the textual interpreting of twentieth-century critics. For other than textual work Pound relies pretty generally on accepted scholarship; for instance, his view of the "softening up" of the classical Latin tradition by influxes of personalism, mysticism and anti-authoritarianism was and is the standard view of Mackail and others. If he rates a poet more highly than most scholars do, he usually has a substantial backer; thus he follows Dante's estimate of Arnaut Daniel. Where he does devote himself to "criticism pure," however, he opens up whole regions of insight, although he barely takes time to label them. For instance, he analyzes the troubadour sensibility in a fashion which anticipates Eliot's analysis of the Metaphysical one:

> Did this "chivalric love," this exotic, take on mediumistic properties? Stimulated by the color or quality of emotion, did that "color" take on forms interpretive of the divine order? Did it lead to an "exteriorization of the sensibility," an interpretation of the cosmos by feeling? (94)

Pound writes either a sort of shorthand Roman-historian prose or a rather jerky, idiomatic one stuffed with metaphors from Physics 2 and music. The whole gives the impression that the writer's been around and is quite anxious to get you around as quickly as possible. The jerkiness helps one to see that the coherence of a book like this is largely one of texture, of an ever-available and steady sympathy — a rather negative way of defining a very positive and "present" book.

Pound's essential originality is something quite different of course from either his prose or his critical insight; he is the great aggrandizer, the Sir Francis Drake of foreign literatures. Rossetti and Swinburne for all their fine translating never really brought home anything but some squinty-eyed Rossettis and Swinburnes; for all his "historicism," Browning never left Wimpole Street.

As everyone knows, Pound brought Arnaut and Cavalcanti and even Dante to English and American poets and into English and American poetry on a grand scale. (Landor and Shelley had done it before in a smaller and I think more eccentric way.) Not only did he usually translate as if nothing but gauze lay between the centuries and tongues, but his own verse began to ring with the imported voices, and thus the sensibility of English and even the modes of poetic perception were extended.

Both *The Spirit of Romance* and the volume issued even more recently by New Directions, *The Tranlations of Ezra Pound,** show him in the act of translating — the "act of translating" because it is partially the printed show of energy that makes for much of the marvel and also much of the peculiarity of Pound's work.

The marvel comes mostly when Pound, in the line of Goulding and North and the other great Elizabethan translators, is releasing the force of a text by spotting the origins of the force and duplicating them. Often this involves the use of English cognates of foreign words so used that they will assume the slightly different meaning of the original and even some of the original phonetic value. This can be so slight an extension as the rendering of "Tan m'abelis vostre cortes deman" as "So pleasureth me your courteous demand" (where "request" is the more precise rendering of the last word); or it can become unnecessarily violent as in the translation of "adsonat Terei puella subter umbram populi" into "There, in the poplar shade the Tyrrean girl" (where "Tyrrean" is the poem's only reference to Tereus and might very well be missed, an omission which would entrain the burying of a whole network of reference).

The last example, taken from *The Spirit of Romance,* is somehow or other glossed over or even forgiven there. Within the more exclusive presentations of "pure translation," however, Pound often runs into difficulty, the difficulty of operating without a didactic framework and yet wanting to say something about the total *oeuvre* of a poet which doesn't seem to be adequately said in the particular text at hand. The section on the Noh plays is in a sense, therefore, the most satisfying in *The Translations* despite the fact that the plays themselves seem comparatively dull away from the highly stylized dances for which the texts are settings or causative agents. The Noh section is in the style of *The Spirit of Romance,* and Pound has been able to "set" the translations with his prodding commentary and thus produce that atmosphere of discovery and initiation which is so impressive a part of his work. Another reason for the success of this section is that Fenollosa had apparently worked so close to the texts that they lost the difficult archaic quality they are said to have for modern Japanese and appear in Pound's English simple and classical.

What is peculiar in Pound's translating shows up mostly in the famous versions of Cavalcanti and Arnaut Daniel. Away from the didactic context, Pound has tended to burden some of the translations with an antique weight (perhaps in order to carry what has since become staple or cliché or what has since vanished altogether from the tradition):

---

* Containing text and translation of fifty or so poems by Guido Cavalcanti, ten poems by Arnaut Daniel, commentary on and translations of some of the Noh plays, *Cathay* (mostly poems by Li-Po), *The Seafarer,* six miscellaneous poems and some maxims of Remy de Gourmont.

'Tis he hath hurled the dart, wherefrom my pain,
First shot's resultant! and in flanked amaze . . .

is the version of

Lanciato m'ha d'un dardo entro lo fianco;
Si giunse il colpo dritto al primo tratto . . .

It would be difficult to imagine a great translator slipping further away from a text, or from poetry itself: "pain" is presumed in the Italian, "amaze" is not even presumed, "flanked" is a mangled echo of "fianco" and "First shot's resultant" is blown up with Pound's desire to say something about the mechanical-spiritual correspondence which is often the key to Cavalcanti's strategy — or at least about something else which, in *The Spirit of Romance,* went properly into prose. So, in the latter work, Pound has told us that Arnault is often jazzy; and, sure enough,

Tan pareis genta
Cella quem te joios
Las gensors trenta
Vens de belas faisos!

has a jazzy or at least a Castillian lyric quality to it. Pound's version, however, sounds like John Gower in Shuberts' Alley:

She's so the rarest
who holdeth me thus gay,
The thirty fairest
can not contest her sway.

Unfortunately, there's a great deal of this.

Yet this is reviewer's caviling, dust on a very bright halo. Generally Pound's energy and tact are unmatched. When there is a textual alteration, you bend with the remover to remove because the alteration is the gambit which snares the real prey. It may be slight like "When dry words rattle in my throat" for "Quand' io ti rispondea fiochetto e piano," or it may be wholesale like the consistently less lyric version of Laforgue that Pound gives in order to emphasize the sad glitter and wit of the original:

Your eyes! Since I lost their incandescence
Flat calm engulphs my jibs,
The shudder of *Vae soli* gurgles beneath my ribs . . .

for

Il me faut, vos yeux! Dès que je perds leur étoile,
Le mal des calmes plats s'engouffre dans ma voile,
Le frisson du *Vae soli!* gargouille en mes moelles . . .

The finest English verse in *The Translations* comes in *The Seafarer* and in the Chinese poems of *Cathay.* There whatever is sporty or cagy or antique or labyrinthine in other sections of the book drops away and we have the pure, emotionally subtle, lovely verse which most English readers have Pound alone to thank for knowing.

The sort of "faults" we've cited above are like those Pound is often accused of committing in a kind of accusation which, in my own case at any rate, was once coupled with the admonition "not to stop at Pound." I think one would

not do too badly "stopping with Pound" except that it would mean having missed the major swing of his criticism-translation — which is hortatory. Pound mostly says, Look! there's marvellous stuff here and there; here is a chunk of it and here's what it's about and what it has to do with this or that and so on, until his voice seems to go up with defiant expectation and you've scurried around the corner to buy the Provencal *Chrestomathy* and Portuguese, Spanish and Chinese dictionaries. It's like getting a wonderful postcard from the Fiji Islands — you'd always thought there were only stumps and crayfish there, but now you sell your train ticket to California and take steamship passage.

ROBERT O. BOWEN

Kipling's India Revisited

E. M. FORSTER: *The Hill of Devi.* Harcourt Brace.

This is neither the Forster of *A Passage to India* nor of *A Room with a View.* It is, in fact, hardly Forster the novelist at all. We find candor here rather than subtlety, and a mass of letters, links, footnotes and chronicle rather than a skilfully rendered essay. Simply enough, the book is organized around two series of letters, 1912-13 and 1921, largely personal and chatty, written by Forster in the course of an early visit to a minor Indian state and a later period of service there as the maharaja's private secretary. The state is the Senior Branch of the hereditarily confused twin States of Dewas, now reorganized into the Indian State of Madhya Bharat. There is in the book considerable of the Gilbert and Sullivan impression of Oriental principalities — ridiculous mismanagement, deathless intrigue, flittings from despair to gayety. Behind the proscenium of this comico-tragic opera, however, is the deep pathos of a ruler who has essentially a fine spirit but who lacks almost totally the attributes of an administrator. *Grotesque* would describe the situation more exactly than *burlesque.*

Although the author coyly admits that "Indians aren't quaint," and he often glosses in justification for Hindu conduct which his letters explain as asinine, he is not truly condescending. His views on Hindu religion, for example, are hardly profound, nor does he claim them so. He finds that in practice the main elements of Hindu ritual are gibberish but that somehow the religion answers the people's spiritual needs. He would, no doubt, feel the exact same toward Dublin Catholicism or Manchester Protestantism. This points to what is perhaps the book's real value.

If a work of art is to be judged according to its statement of a given *Zeitgeist* and solely by that, this book is a rather considerable work of art within a narrow tradition. Like Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast,* it is concerned not with a direct statement from within the culture it pretends to be concerned with but rather by innuendo with the author himself. Dana's value was in his probably unconscious portrayal of the very best of the New England gentry. The value of *The Hill of Devi* is in its revealing with great candor the mind and heart of an English public school man active in Indian affairs. In approaching Hindu religion, it would betray the author's public school church (not religious) training to attach the significance of either condescension or contempt to what he felt

to be ridiculous. There is here, too, an echo of Victorianism in his belief that religion is necessary though somewhat foolish and time-consuming. Propriety is the tone throughout, restraint. Indignation falls short of anger, distaste short of contempt, though both are much called for. Naturally enough, one of the author's most effectively conveyed impressions is of extreme shock at the maharaja's bad taste in interior decoration. The actual narration is typical of that public school morbid fear of penetrating and forceful discussion on meaningful things in life which is reducing the contemporary British novel to the level of parlor talk to one's maiden aunt.

The two main characters in the book are the exasperatingly childish but charming maharaja and Forster, his secretary. Despite tremendous superficial differences between these two, both essentially stand aside from the life which clatters around and past them as noisily as the cymbals of Senior Branch Dewas religious processions. The friendship between Hindu and Englishman grows out of this deep similarity. Both are in a sense members of a caste, and, though Forster's position is not threatened as the maharaja's is, we feel that each recognizes that nothing can truly alter himself or the other. Thus neither really participates in life. The maharaja shuns involvement by fleeing into spasmodic bursts of prayer and by whims and by an all-out lack of policy and discipline. The secretary avoids it by restraint built on diffidence. The maharaja's whimsy led to his ruin, and, when he died in exile after a bankruptcy, the *Times* obituary said of him that "an ungovernable temper and self-indulgence led to serious deterioration." In his friend's defense Forster writes: ". . . there is [in the *Times*] not one hint that he was lovable and brilliant and witty and charming, and (more exasperating still) not one hint that he was complex." From the portrayal of the characters of the two, revealed possibly without intent, we can only conclude that a charming Hindu maharaja *may* be loved but that a public school man *will* endure. What is odd and often impelling about the book is that these two are almost ideal types of the castes they represent although both are as chattily real as one's cousin. The difference in their presentation is that we see quite clearly the inside of the secretary, whereas Forster admits that the real character of the maharaja remained a paradox to him to the end.

Because its probably unconscious and unintended real light comes from reflection on the narrator rather than focus on its stated protagonist, the book must be included in the Dana tradition. This reviewer finds that tradition below the level of art, but he will agree that the book offers interesting reading in standard, almost ideal, British public school prose. Like the public school man, it is a reasonable production which contains nothing new or startling.

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